Fall 12-2014

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Implementation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant in Mississippi Pilot Schools

Albert William Carter
University of Southern Mississippi

The University of Southern Mississippi

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHER INCENTIVE FUND (TIF) GRANT IN MISSISSIPPI PILOT SCHOOLS

by

Albert William Carter

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2014

ABSTRACT

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHER INCENTIVE FUND (TIF) GRANT IN MISSISSIPPI PILOT SCHOOLS

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The purpose of this research study was to assess administrators and teachers' perceptions of the key components of the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant in Mississippi pilot schools. The study examines the difference in perceptions between administrators and teachers. The study also investigated if there was a relationship with the TIF grant and student achievement by comparing the percent of students who scored a minimum of proficient on the MCT2 in TIF schools before and after the grant. Achievement was also examined by comparing percent of proficiency of TIF schools with comparable, non-TIF Mississippi schools.

The participants in the study were certified educators from the 10 Mississippi TIF grant pilot schools. All teachers and administrators at each school were invited to participate in the study. Approximately 181 educators participated. Of this number, twenty-four were administrators and 157 were teachers. The participants completed the Mississippi TIF (Teacher Incentive Fund) Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 40 statements, including demographic information. The questionnaire was analyzed for descriptive statistics, comparisons, and differences between groups and proficiency scores. School achievement data was obtained from the Mississippi Department of Education Accountability Reporting System.

The results from this study indicated that administrators and teachers' perceptions of common education practices are consistent with current research as it pertains to performance-based compensation, educator evaluation, professional development, professional learning communities, and career ladders. The findings also indicated that there were significant differences in the administrators and teachers' perceptions of the TIF grant components. Although both groups of educators had low perceptions of the implementation of the Mississippi TIF Grant, teachers' perceptions were higher than administrators' perceptions on all components, except one. Professional development was the only component that revealed no significant statistical difference. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the percentage of students who scored a minimum of proficient on state tests after the grant was implemented in TIF schools. Lastly, the results indicated that there was no significant statistical difference in the growth of TIF schools when compared to non-TIF school growth. Both sets of schools grew over time.

The University of Southern Mississippi

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Approved:

Dr. Thelma J. Roberson_____
Committee Chair

Dr. Stanley C. Benigno_____

Dr. James T. Johnson_____

Dr. Myron Labat_____

Dr. Karen Coats_____
Dean of the Graduate School

December 2014

DEDICATION

I would like to thank God for his wisdom, protection, and strength throughout this endeavor. There were many nights that I grew weary of the drive, but I was renewed by His presence.

I must acknowledge my family. My father, the late Albert William Carter, Sr., instilled in all of us the importance of a good education and excelling academically. I hope that obtaining this degree makes you proud as I often think of your encouragement and the smile and nod of assurance you gave whenever any of us did well in school. Thanks to my mother, Rosie Bush-Carter, for always encouraging me and calling to check on me while on the road to and from Hattiesburg. Even when you didn't understand why I was going back to school (again), you still supported me. My sisters, Melissa Carter and Felicia Carter-Whitley, you were the first to encourage me when I told you I was thinking about going back to school to pursue a doctorate. You both have been planning my graduation party for a couple of years- I'm ready now! To my aunt, Dr. Gladys Bush, I know you wanted me to be a medical doctor like you. Even though I'm not obtaining an M.D., I hope you're still proud since you were an inspiration to many of your nieces and nephews. To my little niece Jessica, thanks for being such a joy every time I see you.

Thanks to Wesley Williams and Dr. Marilyn Herrington who pushed me years ago by telling me that a bachelor degree wasn't enough when I finished undergrad. Then, you both told me a Masters wasn't enough either. Dr. Marjuyua Lartey-Rowser, thanks for your advice and help with my stats homework whenever I got stuck! I would also like to acknowledge many other family members and friends who encouraged and prayed

for me along the way: Rhemalyn Lewis, Skyla and Nelson Wilson, Elizabeth Jones, Robert Turner, Dr. Tarance Hart, Ashley Roland, Joycelyn McCoy, Dr. Earl Watkins, Darrell Bullocks, and Victor Hubbard. Thanks to my past and current supervisors who were so gracious to let me off early when I had class: Cecily McNair, Dr. Daphne Buckley, and Cerissa Neal. Thanks to the ministers whose words and sermons encouraged me and gave me what I needed to go on: Dr. Creflo Dollar, Bishop T. D. Jakes, Pastor Kaye Strambler, and Pastor Rasean Thomas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Thelma Roberson. Thanks so much for your guidance throughout this process. I am so grateful for my dissertation committee who assisted me in every phase of the journey: Dr. J. T. Johnson, Dr. Chuck Benigno, and Dr. Myron Labat. I would also like to thank my former advisor, Dr. Rose McNeese.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mississippi public schools have a salary schedule for teachers based solely upon the number of years of experience and level of education or certification. The Mississippi Department of Education Office of School Financial Services provides the teacher base salary schedule for the state of Mississippi; however, each district can add a supplemental amount to the annual salary (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013e). The 2013-14 starting yearly salary for a teacher in Mississippi with 0 years of experience and a bachelor's degree was $30,900; master's degree was $32,960; specialist's degree was $33,990; and doctorate was $35,020 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013e). Incremental salary increases occur annually for every year of experience and level of certification, e.g., annual increases for 2013-2014 were: bachelor's: $495; master's: $660; specialist's: $727; and doctorate $794 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013e). Teacher annual salary increases occur annually for years of experience for up to 25 years of service. The teacher's salary also increases if she or he earns a higher degree. These salary increases occur automatically and are not correlated with job performance or student achievement. That is, teachers get a yearly increase to their salary each year of service (for up to 25 years of service) despite of the level of impact they have made on student achievement (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013e). Many individuals, including educators and non-educators, believe teacher pay should be linked to variables beyond years of experience and level of education (Hess, 2010). "One-size-fits-all compensation means that we're either paying the most effective employees too little, paying their less effective colleagues too much, or, most times, a little of each" (Hess,

2010, p. 52). Kobakhidze (2010) asserted that teacher salaries can be linked directly to the achievement level of an educational entity because it influences so many things.

Johnson and Papay (2010) reported that those who oppose the traditional pay scale feel it is unfair and a waste of tax payers' money to give teachers a yearly raise just because they stay in the field. Johnson and Papay (2010) also reported that many young teachers leave the field of education because of fixed salary schedules; teachers with few years of experience want the opportunity to earn more in their careers even if they have only been working a few years. These teachers do not want to have to wait until they have been in their career several years to earn a good salary. According to Dee and Keys (2004), the reason the pay system was first initiated may no longer be valid in today's society.

> This "single salary" approach was widely adopted in the first half of the 20th century, partly as a response to the capriciousness and outright discrimination that had existed under more discretionary forms of compensation. But, in recent years, this fixed approach has been widely criticized for failing to attract, motivate, and retain high-quality teachers. (Dee & Keys, 2004, p. 471)

The U. S. Department of Education has created an alternative to this single salary approach for educators (Teacher Incentive Fund, 2010).

U. S. Department of Education Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)

During the Teacher Incentive Fund's (TIF) inception in 2006, the U. S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund grant impacted the following: 33 grant sites in 18 states, 109 school districts (including charter school districts), 55,000 teachers, and 2,500 principals (Teacher Incentive Fund, 2010). The overall purpose for

the grant is to "use financial incentives to help schools serving largely poor and minority children to have at least as many effective teachers and administrators as other schools" (Keller, 2006b, p. 7). TIF was funded by both the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and U. S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations to support local initiatives that reward teachers, principals, and other school personnel who improve student achievement. In Table 1, McCann (2012) of New America Foundation reported the amount of appropriations and awards since the inception of TIF.

Table 1

Teacher Incentive Fund: Appropriations, FY2006-2012

Year	Funding ($ millions)	Number of Awards
2012	299.4	35 (New)
2011	399.2	80 (Continuation)
2010	400.0	33(Continuation) 62(New)
2009	297.3	34 (Continuation)
2008	97.3	34 (Continuation)
2007	0.2	0
2006	99.0	34 (New)

The financial incentives of TIF are obtained by performance-based measures in school achievement, such teacher evaluation, student growth measures by the teacher, and student growth measures by the school. Glazerman, Chiang, Wellington, Constantine, Player and Mathematics Policy Research (2011), discussed TIF as being

"designed to evaluate teacher effectiveness by estimating teachers' contributions to students' achievement gains and then rewarding teachers, in part, on this dimension of performance" (p. 1). TIF reflected these assertions in its initial design. According to Humphrey et al. (2012), TIF had several purposes when it was created, such incentivizing teachers and principals for making academic growth, placing more effective teachers and administrators in critical shortage schools and subjects, and to ensure that the efforts of TIF would continue long after the project expires.

Anticipating that conversations about a performance-based compensation system for educators would generate fear and apprehension, U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan arranged for three national groups (the National Education Association- NEA, the American Association of School Administrators- AASA, and the National School Boards Association- NSBA) to convene to ensure that the guidelines established in TIF were fair and equitable for all educators and that there was representation of teachers, administrators, and school governing boards (Sawchuck, 2010a). This joint committee came up with eleven guiding principles for TIF:

Guiding Principles for Teacher Incentive Compensation

1. School boards, administrators and unions/associations should review various models of incentive compensation plans, including research about their effectiveness, before developing a plan at the local level.
2. School boards, administrators and unions/associations should work together to build ongoing community and stakeholder support for both the incentive compensation plan as well as the necessary funding.

3. School boards, administrators and unions/associations should work together to develop and implement the plan utilizing collective bargaining where it exists. In locations where collective bargaining does not exist, teachers who would be using the new system should indicate their support for the program.
4. In the implementation of the incentive compensation plan, teachers should be provided assistance, including time, curriculum and professional development to increase student achievement.
5. The foundation of incentive compensation plans shall be professional-level base salaries.
6. Funding for the plan shall be adequate and sustainable.
7. The plan and its requirements should be transparent, easily understood and uniformly implemented.
8. A detailed implementation plan, with agreed-upon benchmarks and timelines, should be developed.
9. The incentive compensation plan should be based on a multifactor approach (e.g., teacher evaluations, student performance growth, specific goals set by the teachers and management, increased responsibilities, assessments of student learning) that is research-based and improves student achievement.
10. All employees who meet the criteria for the incentive compensation plan should be compensated accordingly, and incentive compensation plans should foster collaboration not competition.

11. Evaluations, if a factor in incentive compensation plans, should be fair, of high quality and rigorous, and shall take into account multiple measures of student progress. (Sawchuck, 2010a, p. 24)

Originally, the NEA opposed TIF and any other performance-based structure, especially one that used test scores as a way to measure effectiveness or growth (Sawchuck, 2010a). However, NEA's president made a change because he saw "benefits in those plans that emphasize professional development to improve teacher practice, as well as evaluation" (Sawchuck, 2010a, p. 24). Hassel and Katzir (2010) discussed the great opportunities presented by the TIF. It was created to transform education in America, which is being piloted in Mississippi and is the basis of this research study (Hassel & Katzir, 2010). Other states, districts and schools can use the research and trial and error of the TIF grantees as a model to develop their own effective performance-based compensation systems for teachers and principals (Hassel & Katzir, 2010).

According to Humphrey et al. (2012), participants were given options to choose their levels of commitment to the TIF grant. Some districts chose to only reward principals, while others included teachers. Other districts only allowed teachers in tested areas to participate instead of all teachers. Approximately 25 of the grantees supplemented their TIF funds to include compensation incentives for teacher aides, counselors, and other staff members (Humphrey et al., 2012). Other differences among grantees included allowing educators to participate on a voluntary basis. Under these provisions, an individual participant had to actively "enroll" in the system as well as meet performance criteria in order to receive an incentive award" (Humphrey et al., 2012, p. x). Although there were options, there were requirements (with options) to offering

additional compensation incentives for those who taught in schools that are hard-to-staff or in a specific high-needs area (Glazerman et al., 2011). Also, recipients of the 2010 TIF were required to create a pay system for teachers and principals that was differentiated based on performance measures, such as student growth and observations. Additionally, funds were used to provide job-embedded professional development and career ladder positions, such as master and mentor teachers (Glazerman et al., 2011).

Targeted professional development is one of the components of the grant, and is one of the factors that prompted the NEA to offer its support after its initial opposition. The pay structure for teachers changed from the traditional salary schedule; however, they would receive additional and targeted support to help them improve their practice in order to see increases in student achievement (Sawchuck, 2010b). "Ten grantees offered teachers additional pay for attending professional development, and at least 13 grantees provided teachers professional development in their schools through coaches and master and mentor teachers" (Humphrey et al., 2012, p. xii).

Accountability

The TIF is another attempt to reshape the face of American education and bring forth greater accountability. For years, political officials and citizens have voiced their opinions of the American public education system, which have not been favorable (Linn, 2008). There have been several different policies and laws implemented to increase educational accountability that require educational entities to improve student performance. This lack of success of schools has caused law makers to adopt education mandates to enforce measures such as high-stakes testing, performance-based compensation and publicizing test results in order to raise achievement (Macartney,

2013). This discontentment with American K-12 education has been shared by higher education officials who report a greater amount of students needing interventions (such as additional and longer periods of training) to be successful in their studies. Other dissatisfaction has come from employers who are not pleased with the work skills of high school graduates (Linn, 2006).

Some view testing as being synonymous with accountability; however, others in education disagree.

> …one thinks of testing and accountability as twins in education; tests, it is assumed, produce the data on which accountability for results are based…although testing has been a staple in American public education since the nineteenth century, the idea of accountability—holding not only students but teachers, schools, even school districts accountable for student performance—is a more contemporary invention. (Ravitch, 2002, p. 2)

According to Ravitch (2002), testing at the end of the 19th century was implemented to identify the students who should be in school and could handle the challenge of attaining an education and to weed out those who could not. The purpose and design of testing changed after the birth of educational psychology at the beginning of the 20th century. Educational psychology used assessment as a means to determine strengths and weaknesses in learning, as well as in instruction (Bozic, 2013). During the Great Depression, children were not tested and accountability was more relaxed (Ravitch, 2002). Students were encouraged to stay in school and out of the job market; their performance was not a factor. This created a "spread of social promotion" whereby

"students would not be held accountable for their performance in school", which was "a complete turnaround from nineteenth-century practices" (Ravitch, 2002, p. 4).

The history of accountability in education can be traced back to the 1960's with the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 during President Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty (Standerfer, 2006). This act assured that there would be funds allocated for public education with increased accountability and a goal of providing greater equality in educational services for all students. To support the new accountability, there needed to be a way to assess the learning and achievement of students. Thus, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was created. Standerfer (2006) noted that at that time scores were only reported by regions and not by specific schools or states.

The environment of public education changed greatly in the 1980's as a result of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report A Nation at Risk. The report suggested that if drastic changes did not occur in U. S. schools, the country's economy would be far behind that of other nations (Standerfer, 2006). The report addressed specific issues such as low achievement on standardized tests, increasing rate of students dropping out, and high numbers of ineffective teachers (Iverson, 2001). Before this report, there was no emphasis placed on the quality of the U. S. education system and how it compared with other countries (Standerfer, 2006). No longer was the blame for this failure placed on the students, but now the blame was placed on the system itself (Stone, 2005). Stone (2005) reported that before this time accountability focused more on strict budgetary and financial rules, not on learning outcomes. Furthermore, he added that the education entities' internal evaluations and self-governance were not

enough to determine the issues and properly fix them. This change of focus caused educators to take a deeper look at their educational programs to discover how they needed to change in order to meet the new demands of increased accountability (Standerfer, 2006).

The increase in educational accountability continued throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. President George H. W. Bush called an education summit for state governors in 1989 (New York Department of Education, 2009). President Bush expressed his concern about education in America. He elaborated on the need to set performance goals which all education entities should seek to meet. Although the goals were not established until after the summit, he later released the six goals in his 1990 State of the Union Address that should be met by year 2000:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.
3. American students will leave grades four, eight, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a safe, disciplined environment conducive to learning. (New York Department of Education, 2009, p. 56)

Former President Bill Clinton, who was the governor of Arkansas at that time, was a leader at the summit and led the efforts in establishing and communicating the educational goals. This effort provided the basis for the subsequent Goals 2000 program of 1994 that then President Bill Clinton put in place during his first term in the White House (Linn, 2008).

Education was one of the first priorities of George W. Bush when he took office in 2001 through his establishment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This was the most rigorous and farthest reaching set of educational accountability standards established since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Anderson, 2005). NCLB totally contradicted and overturned the federal government's minimum involvement in education that was established by previous policies. There were several basic requirements and mandates included in NCLB, such as measures to determine if schools and districts were growing annually and requirements for teachers to be fully certified in the subjects they taught (Anderson, 2005). NCLB also placed emphasis on the improvement of academic achievement for disadvantaged students. As a result, states had to create standards and assessments for grades 3-8 in mathematics and reading that could provide explicit information to all stakeholders on how well schools, districts, and states were fairing academically (Figlio & Loeb, 2011). These strict educational mandates were unrealistic targets for many districts and states (Riddle & Kober, 2012). Many public education entities worried greatly about how their organizations would meet

the standards and feared the established consequences for not meeting the standards (Riddle & Kober, 2012). During President Obama's administration, states were allowed to apply for waivers that excluded them from meeting some of the requirements of NCLB, and by 2012, 47 states, including Mississippi, had accepted some form of waiver from the U. S. Department of Education (Riddle & Kober, 2012).

According to the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) Federal Programs website, MDE submitted Mississippi's ESEA Flexibility (Waiver) Request to the United States Department of Education (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013b). The request was approved by the United States Department of Education July 19, 2012, by a multi-tiered peer review process, and July 20, 2012, the Mississippi State Board of Education approved for these changes to go into effect during 2012-13 school year (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013b). Principle 3 of the waiver regarding Teacher and Principal Evaluation was the target of a second peer-review process that took place in July 2012. On April 24, 2013, Mississippi received final approval of Principle 3 of the Mississippi ESEA Flexibility Waiver (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013b).

Statement of the Problem

The Mississippi Department of Education applied for and received competitive grant money in 2010 from the United States Department of Education to pilot a performance-based compensation system in 10 schools from various regions of the state (IMPACT MS, 2010). This five-year pilot is called the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (MS TIF) grant. The following table is a list of the MS TIF grant participants that are currently a part of the pilot.

Table 2

Mississippi TIF Grant Participants

School	District	Grades
Bruce Upper Elementary	Calhoun County School District	4-6
Cook Elementary	Columbus School District	K-5
Franklin Academy	Columbus School District	K-5
Central Elementary	George County School District	K-6
Oak Forest Elementary	Jackson Public School District	K-5
Van Winkle Elementary	Jackson Public School District	K-5
North Jones Elementary	Jones County School District	K-6
Magee Middle School	Simpson County School District	5-8
Mendenhall Junior High	Simpson County School District	5-8
Buckatunna Elementary	Wayne County School District	K-8

This study is important to the current state of education reform in Mississippi, because current Governor Phil Bryant has proposed to move the entire state public school system to a performance-based compensation system for educators (Bryant, 2012). Governor Bryant has initiated a pilot in several school districts to determine how merit pay can work as a state-wide system. In the governor's pilot, each district is given permission to develop its own system. Bryant (2012) believes this initiative will increase student achievement in the state. "A teacher compensation program that pays for

performance instead of simply an accumulation of years in the classroom will put us on the path to excellence and move our state forward" (Bryant, 2012, p. 2).

Purpose

The U. S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund was created to provide funding for awarded states to implement various school improvement initiatives that would raise student achievement and highlight teacher quality (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a significant relationship between the implementation of the MS TIF grant and percent of proficient scores, and to understand principal and teacher perceptions on the implementation of the grant. There are eight elementary schools and two middle schools participating in the MS TIF grant. Each school selected for the pilot had minimal or no growth in student achievement during the selection school year of 2009-2010 (IMPACT MS, 2010). The MS TIF grant was designed to determine if a performance-based compensation system along with other components affect student achievement by measuring the QDI (Quality Distribution Index) of each school throughout the grant period. As a part of the career ladders component, the Mississippi TIF grant created various opportunities for teachers, such as master teacher, mentor teacher, and professional development coordinators (IMPACT MS, 2010). The study differentiates from the MS TIF grant pilot in that it used percent of students that score a minimum of proficient on state tests to determine student achievement each year since the grant implementation and two years before, it compared student achievement of each TIF school with a comparable Mississippi school with similar demographics, and it evaluated educator perceptions. In contrast, the MS

TIF pilot used principal and teacher evaluations and QDI to determine school-wide and individual teacher growth from year to year.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_1: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant.

2. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Performance-based compensation component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_2: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Performance-based compensation component.

3. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Professional Development component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_3: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Professional Development component.

4. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Professional Learning Communities component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_4: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Professional Learning Communities component.

5. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Career Ladders component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_5: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Career Ladders component.

6. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_6: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems component.

7. Is there a significant difference between the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools before and after the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_7: There is no significant difference between percentage of proficient students and the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant.

8. Is there a significant difference in the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF Schools and comparable non-TIF Mississippi schools?

   H_8: There is no statistically significant difference between percent of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools and comparable non-TIF Mississippi schools.

Definition of Terms

Career Ladder- For the purposes of this study, refers to additional teacher positions created at each participating school for the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund grant: master teacher, mentor teacher, and professional development coordinator (IMPACT MS, 2010)

Master teacher- For purposes of this study, teachers who are chosen through a performance-based selection process (including through assessment of their teaching effectiveness and the ability to work effectively with other adults and students) and who

have responsibilities to share effective instructional practices and/or to assess and improve the teaching effectiveness of other teachers in the school. (U. S. Department of Education, 2010)

Mentor teacher- For purposes of this study, in addition to teaching their classes, refers to a teacher who gives support in the areas of classroom management, curriculum, and instructional strategies to novice teachers (U. S. Department of Education, 2010)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) - a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965, 1994). It made significant changes in the federal government's involvement in education and in the ways that schools educate children in the U.S. The primary purpose of NCLB is to ensure that students in every public school achieve important learning goals while being educated in safe classrooms by well-prepared teachers (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Performance-Based Compensation (PBCS) - the practice of connecting educators' compensation to their performance in the classroom or school through evaluation and/or other growth measures (Tryjankowski, Henry, & Verrall, 2012).

Professional Development- For the purposes of this study, refers to the ongoing learning and training of educators that provides them with skills and strategies to implement in their learning environment, with the overall purpose of enhancing student learning and achievement (Broughman, 2006).

Professional Development Coordinator- For purposes of this study, teachers who are chosen through a performance-based selection process (including through assessment of their teaching effectiveness and the ability to work effectively with other adults and

students) who coordinates professional development programs and related activities for teachers (U. S. Department of Education, 2010).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)- an ongoing process through which teachers and administrators work collaboratively to seek and share learning and to act on their learning, their goal being to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for students' benefit *(*DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006).

Student Achievement- For the purposes of this study, will be measured by the Quality Distribution Index (QDI) that provides a measure of overall school or district level performance on the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT2- English and Math for grades 3-8, Science for Grades 5 and 8); Subject Area Testing Program (SATP- High school Algebra I, Biology I, U.S. History, and English II with a writing component); and Mississippi Alternate Assessment of Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MAAECF). The QDI measures the distribution of student performance on these state assessments around the cut points for Basic, Proficient, and Advanced performance (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013d).

Teacher evaluation- the judging of a teacher's performance based on an established set of criteria (Marzano, 2012a). For the purposes of this study, teachers were evaluated using the Mississippi Statewide Teacher Appraisal Rubric (M-STAR) (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c).

Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)- supports efforts to develop and implement performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need schools. Goals include: Improving student achievement by increasing teacher and principal effectiveness; Reforming teacher and principal compensation systems so that teachers

and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement; Increasing the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff subjects; and Creating sustainable performance-based compensation systems (U. S. Department of Education, 2012).

Delimitations

This study is delimited to the 10 schools in Mississippi receiving the MS TIF grant. The study is also delimited to 10 non-TIF schools in Mississippi with similar demographics (racial make-up, location, enrollment, rate of free and reduced lunch) as TIF Schools for the purpose of comparing achievement data for 2 years before and since implementation the MS TIF grant. Participants are delimited to principals, assistant principals, teachers, and all certified educators (including librarians and counselors) in each school for 2013-14 school year. Data collection occurred by surveying the perceptions of participants on the components of the grant: performance-based compensation, career ladders, professional development, educator evaluation, and professional learning communities through the Mississippi TIF Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire. Student achievement data gathered from the Mississippi Department of Education Accountability Reports was analyzed on percent of proficiency on state standardized tests for years during and just before the implementation of the grant in TIF schools.

Assumptions

It is assumed that participants answered questions to the survey honestly and candidly. It is also assumed that data from Mississippi Department of Education

Accountability Scores identifying the TIF schools are accurate and complete. It is assumed that the list of TIF schools is accurate.

Justification

This study evaluated the components of the MS TIF grant. The grant offers teachers and other certified staff additional pay for their performance. In the MS TIF grant, educator performance was evaluated by analyzing educator evaluations and student growth data and essentially connected to their pay (IMPACT MS, 2010). Educator pay has been a major discussion for law makers and educators in the state of Mississippi (IMPACT MS, 2010). This study helps to determine if pay and other grant components are tied to student achievement. The study also analyzed Mississippi educators' attitudes and perceptions of a merit pay system for teachers.

Summary

This research is presented in five chapters. Chapter I provides the following: (a) an introduction, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions and hypotheses, (e) definition of terms, (f) delimitations, (g) assumptions, and (h) justification. Chapter II provides a review of related literature. Chapter III outlines the methodology and includes the procedures that will be used to conduct this study. Chapter IV and V provide the results of the study and a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature discusses various components of the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (MS TIF) grant. The MS TIF grant uses a performance-based compensation system as one of its essential components. There are four additional components of the grant: educator evaluation, career ladders, professional development, and professional learning communities. The review of literature begins with summary of each component, beginning with performance-based compensation. Then, each component is discussed in detail after the summary. The career ladders component is embedded within the discussion of performance-based compensation.

Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (MS TIF) Grant

Performance-based or merit-pay compensation systems have been used in some school systems to pay teachers according to how they perform in an effort to increase student achievement and are a part of the MS TIF grant (Slotnik, 2009). Educators have seen several types of reforms that promise to be the best choice for enhancing education (Slotnik, 2010). Slotnik (2010) has asserted that performance-based compensation systems have the potential to change the face of education more than any other type of reform. Slotnik believes few reforms have the capacity to truly go to the nucleus of a problem like performance-based compensation. “Compared to virtually any major education reform of the past 25 years, performance-based compensation exhibits the most potential for serving as a catalyst for district-wide change” (Slotnik, 2010, p. 48). In this

pay structure, student growth and student achievement are used to identify how well the students of each certified teacher performs.

According to Ritter and Jensen (2010), those who are in favor of performance-based pay strongly believe that if properly implemented, merit pay will ensure that the best in the field are recruited and rewarded, and teachers with poor performance/student achievement scores will be forced to improve or leave the profession. Performance-based compensation systems rely heavily on student achievement measures (Ritter & Jensen, 2010). Student achievement is commonly determined by student performance on high-stakes tests (Slotnik, 2009). At the time of study, student achievement of students in public schools in Mississippi was measured by the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2) for elementary and middle school students, and by the Subject Area Test Programs (SATP) for high school students (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013d). In a merit-pay system, scores on such high-stakes tests would be included as evidence of a teacher meriting additional pay. If a teacher's students are not performing up to a certain standard on these high-stakes tests, the teacher would not receive any incentive or extra compensation (Hassel & Katzir, 2010).

Another major component of the TIF is educator evaluation, which is the judging of an educator's performance based on an established set of criteria (Marzano, 2012b). Many reforms in education, such as No Child Left Behind, School Improvement Grant, and Teacher Incentive Fund, have caused state departments of education and school districts to revisit the ways in which teachers are evaluated (Shakman et al., 2012). According to Danielson (2010), teacher evaluation systems are no longer quick, "drive-by checklists" of the past; many now require more rigorous processes and must include

multiple measures (p. 38). These multiple measures usually include such items as measures of student growth, observations of teachers, analysis of teacher artifacts, peer review, student reflections, and others (Shakman et al., 2012). Not only are teachers being evaluated more rigorously, but principals are now being held accountable for student learning. The principal's role was more administrative in nature; however, principals are now being held accountable for more than just managing the facilities of the school (Connelly, 2013). The actions of the administrator in a school have a direct impact on the level of student achievement in a school and therefore, principals should be evaluated on criteria that include measures of student performance (Connelly, 2013). Principals can be the catalyst for change in the school environment and can serve as the instructional leader of their schools (Clifford & Ross, 2012a). In order for this to occur, administrators should be provided with detailed evaluations that tie directly to their leadership skills with feedback and tools to help them grow and development their instructional leadership (Briggs, Davis, & Cheney, 2012).

Another component of TIF is targeted professional development (IMPACT MS, 2010). One of the most critical tools to improve the practice of both teachers and principals is professional development (Sawchuck, 2010b). Through the appropriate evaluation system, areas of needed growth and development should be identified and the individual teacher or principal's supervisor should then work with each educator individually to identify targeted professional development to address those areas (Jerald, 2010). Jerald postulated that significant growth in student achievement or teacher practice could not be expected if teachers were not provided appropriate and individualized professional development. Such individualized professional development

can be provided in a variety of formats including face-to-face venues and online learning, which have been shown to be effective in improving teacher practice (Matzat, 2013).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are another component of TIF (IMPACT MS, 2010). PLCs are becoming increasingly popular in the field of education as a way to bring together academic or grade teams for the purpose of collaborating to achieve a shared purpose (Jones, Stall, & Yarbough, 2013). Hord (2009) described a professional learning community as an ongoing process through which teachers and administrators work collaboratively to seek and share learning and to act on their learning, their goal being to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for students' benefit. There are a variety of ways to implement PLCs; and the administrator should consider the dynamics and needs of his/her staff when establishing PLCs and choose the format that best fits the needs of the group (Dever & Lash, 2013). Establishing PLCs in itself will not necessarily cause a change in the school climate, but positive change can occur when the PLCs and discussions are well-planned, intentional, and centered around evaluating and improving student work (Wells & Feun, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this study has its roots in motivational theory because the additional compensation and recognition associated with excellence in teaching and high student achievement motivate teachers to improve student learning (Andrews, 2011). According to Wagner (1990), motivational theory proposes that one will perform an action with the purpose of fulfilling a need, such as money, recognition, or position. If teachers are motivated to receive an incentive, they will likely work harder to raise their quality of instruction, thus affecting student achievement (Andrews, 2011). This is a

concept borrowed from the corporate workplace (Beer & Katz, 2003). The overall purpose for implementing an incentive system is to motivate the worker to perform better (Beer & Katz, 2003). The anticipation of some type of reward motivates the teacher to employ new practices to enhance the learning environment in their classrooms (Wagner, 1990). When this concept is implemented in a school or district, the collective motivation is the catalyst for change and greater student achievement (Wagner, 1990). The MS TIF grant not only rewards successful teachers with additional financial bonuses, but also the opportunity to move into career ladder positions with more leadership roles and higher salaries (Keller, 2006a). The teacher's motivation to achieve higher positions and earn more income is the theoretical basis for implementing a performance-based compensation system to improve student achievement (Dee & Keys, 2004). If a teacher is motivated by external motivational factors, extrinsic incentives, such as extra pay and advanced positions, will likely motivate a teacher to perform better (Firestone, 2014). However, if a teacher is motivated by internal motivations, intrinsic incentives, such as the desire to always do his or her best to fulfill the task, will be the motive to perform, not extra pay (Firestone, 2014). In order for a performance-based compensation such as TIF to be effective in improving teacher practice and ultimately student achievement, motivation theory suggests that educational leaders should determine what is important to teachers and what motivates them both intrinsically and extrinsically, and then incentivize them based on what truly motivates them (Ozcan, 1996).

Increasing Buy-in for Merit Pay Systems

Johnson and Papay (2010) asserted that it was important that a merit pay system is based on more than just additional compensation alone and that it includes other factors

that will influence student achievement and increase stakeholder buy-in. It is often a misconception in education that money is the only factor to improve academic performance (Bjork, as cited in Hoff, Richard, & Cavanagh, 2006). Ritter and Jensen (2010) discussed how involving teachers in the creation process of a performance-based compensation system increased buy-in, thus causing teachers to improve the quality of instruction. Slotnik (2010) added that this type of reform "must be done with teachers, not to teachers" (p. 45) in order to gain their support. The Siloam School District involved teachers in the process from the very beginning, which resulted in 98% of district teachers being in favor of the performance-based compensation system (Ritter & Jensen, 2010). Johnson and Papay (2010) completed a study that suggested teachers were more in favor of merit pay if there were opportunities for advancement in their careers that did not involve having to go into administration. Dee and Keys (2004) drew similar conclusions based on observation as they evaluated results and data from Tennessee's Career Ladder Evaluation System and the Project STAR class-size experiment.

Yuan et al. (2013) discussed the methods of several different performance-based compensation systems that were created to directly affect student achievement. These systems included consideration for more than just pay. The recommendations included encouraging teachers to provide more engaging and innovative instruction, and recruiting teachers from a more qualified pool of candidates (Yuan et al, 2013).

Types of Merit Pay Systems

According to Fleming (2011), there is literature related to merit pay dating back to the 1970's; since that time, the idea of merit pay has taken many different forms. There

are currently several different types of merit pay systems in operation (Jerald, 2010). Some systems reward only certified staff, while other systems also reward classified employees. Once such example was provided by Ritter and Jensen (2010) who worked to create a merit pay system for one of Arkansas' largest school districts. Through that experience, they identified several lessons they learned that can benefit others working to create similar compensation systems:

Lesson 1: Generate Teacher, Staff, and Administrator Support.

Lesson 2: Develop Rewards that Motivate Teachers in Productive Ways.

Lesson 3: Make the Merit Pay Program Part of a Comprehensive School Improvement Strategy.

Lesson 4: Create a Merit Pay Program that Encourages Collaboration.

Lesson 5: Employ Multiple Measures of Teacher Effectiveness (p. 35).

Another differentiation among merit pay systems is that some performance-based compensation systems reward teachers and classified staff based on the growth of the school as a whole (Jensen, 2012). Growth is measured by gains in student achievement by a certain, previously established target (Jensen, 2012). This is similar to the Cobra Pride Incentive Program piloted in the Fountain Lake School District in Arkansas (Jensen, 2012). In the Fountain Lake study, if a school met growth, all employees were given extra compensation. This system was also mirrored in the state of Alaska where then Gov. Frank H. Murkowski approved a merit pay system to incentivize certified and non-certified staff based on improved student performance on high-stakes tests (Hoff, Richard, & Cavanagh, 2006).

According to Johnson and Papay (2010), some performance-based compensation systems have allowed teachers to receive compensation based on their individual growth instead of using school-wide data. This system can be referred to as a tiered merit pay system. "Unlike the single-salary scale, this pay plan allows for considerable variation as teachers develop in their careers, move from tier to tier, and choose from available opportunities for learning and increased responsibility" (Johnson & Papay, 2010, p. 51). For example, teachers can take on additional roles, such as serving as a *master teacher*, and can earn as much as $20,000 above their regular salaries for duties associated with their new role (Keller, 2006a). As reported by Rothstein (2005), some systems have combined common duties along with growth to determine merit. In these systems, principals could recommend small merit raises for individual teachers based on classroom observations. Additional pay could also be awarded for other positive qualities, such as working well on teacher teams, increasing parent involvement, high quality portfolios of student work, and good student test scores. Among the systems studied by Rothstein, pay increases averaged up to 3% of a teacher's total salary.

Criticisms of Performance-Based Compensation Systems

Performance-based compensation systems are often criticized by teachers' unions (Fleming, 2011). These groups are hesitant to move to performance-pay models because of the current financial strains that already exist in education (Ramirez, 2010). "Unions have been similarly successful at preventing local districts from participating in statewide programs, as the experience in Florida, Iowa, and Texas shows" (Buck & Greene, 2011, p.28). Buck and Greene (2011) added that unions may also water down the details and components of a performance-based compensation system to minimize its potential effect

on schools and student achievement. If there is not true differentiation for performance among teachers, then the system is ineffective (Buck & Greene, 2011). According to Fleming (2011), "both state and district teachers' union members worry that the merit-pay programs themselves are a waste of money and do little to improve teacher performance" (p. 18). Ritter and Jensen (2010) discussed how some who are against performance-based compensation systems believe it will create unhealthy competition and it would not accurately capture all of the things that teachers do daily. Although Slotnik (2010) is in favor of performance-based compensation systems for teachers, he shared what he believed would be challenging. The challenge is that there are so many new programs and reforms in education, it is a cumbersome task to directly identify which measure has impacted student learning and then attach compensation with this perceived measure (Slotnik, 2010). Goldhaber, DeArmond, Player, and Choi (2008) concluded that merit pay has no place in education and offered reasons why merit pay will not work or why it is not a good idea, including not being able to directly measure all success and the negative effect it has on teacher collaboration because of the fear of competition. According to Sawchuk (2010), performance-based compensation systems have not shown that they can improve student achievement. He added that the most rigorous experimental study on this particular type of pay structure concluded that it had no overall effect on student achievement, which causes much debate in the educational sector. His results were based on the Project on Incentives in Teaching, a three-year randomized experiment conducted by researchers affiliated with the National Center on Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt University.

Yuan et al. (2013) completed a study where they interviewed teachers regarding their perceptions of performance-based compensation systems. The study explored teachers in three different incentive programs and addressed the following research questions:

1. Did teachers find these three incentive pay programs to be motivating?
2. In response to the implementation of these programs, did teachers report changes in their practices or their working conditions? (Yuan et al., 2013, p. 4)

In two of the programs, only 55% of the teachers felt that program awarded teachers fairly; only 33% in the third program felt that it was fair. Ninety percent of teachers in one program and 81% of teachers in another program believed "rewarding teachers based on student test score gains was problematic because student test scores did not capture important aspects of teaching performance" (p. 14). Forty-two percent of teachers in a New York performance based compensation system and 50% of teachers in a Tennessee system reported that they would give extra effort for incentive pay; whereas, only 16% of teachers in a Round Rock, Texas schools system reported they would be motivated by extra pay (Yuan et al., 2013). These results showed that teachers in the incentive programs were not in favor of the performance-based compensation systems that were implemented in their districts. The teachers were not willing to add more to their teaching practice than what they already had been doing. Mance (as cited in Sawchuk, 2010c) added why he believed teachers will not work any harder for extra pay. He believed teachers are already working really hard and most of them at their best. In order for merit pay systems to be effective, it must consist of teachers who are holding back in

order to get a financial incentive in order to put forth their best efforts in the classroom (Sawchuck, 2010b).

Sawchuk (2009) criticized teacher incentive pay systems saying they will have no effect on achievement or recruiting quality teachers if other areas of the school environment are not addressed, such as poor school climates and ineffective leadership. He added that teachers who choose these schools will be disheartened if they are expecting drastic changes when merit pay is the only component for improvement of the learning environment. According to Jacobson (2006), states and education entities should not be so quick to move to these types of pay structures for teachers. He added that there is little evidence that financial incentives and merit pay systems increase teacher retention and student achievement. Zehr (2010) discussed results of the Teacher Advancement Program which was a performance-based compensation system first implemented in 40 Chicago schools. A comparison with nonparticipating schools showed that the schools participating in the merit pay system had no greater levels of achievement on math and reading tests than comparison schools (Zehr, 2010, p. 19). Rothstein (2005) criticized merit pay systems because he says that they are modeled after private sector businesses, yet the educational structure is totally different and not designed to operate in a similar way. He further added that the private sector's methods for pay-for-quantity does not fit the pay for performance proposed by those in favor of performance-based pay systems for schools.

When a new performance-based compensation system was initiated in Houston, it received much opposition from teachers and teacher unions because there was little research to support its effectiveness (New pay plan, 2006). The plan does not take into

consideration teachers who teach courses for which there is no high-stakes test to determine a teacher's impact on student achievement, such as the arts, lower elementary grades, and special education (New Pay Plan, 2006). Slotnik (2010) concluded there is too much inconsistency when trying to link teacher compensation to student performance, and that districts should focus on support and accountability (Slotnik, 2010). Dee and Keyes (2004) offered a couple of reasons why many believe performance-based compensation have not been successful for some education entities, which include difficulty in identifying good teachers and incentivizing those who exemplify these qualities.

Dee and Keyes (2004) also discussed how performance-based compensation methods in other countries have not proven to be successful. Kobakhidze (2010) added a negative view on merit pay systems as the result of an analysis of teacher salary structures and incentive programs in 17 Latin American countries. There were mixed results because the systems implement failed to yield a higher quality of teachers or improve teacher performance. Woessmann (2011) added that although many countries show evidence that performance-based compensation systems have increased student achievement in some areas, he is not willing to readily accept that it is valid.

> Specifically, students in countries that permit teacher salaries to be adjusted for outstanding performance score approximately one-quarter of a standard deviation higher on the international math and reading tests, and about 15 percent higher on the science test, than students in countries without performance pay...analysis is based on what researchers refer to as observational rather than experimental data,

making it more difficult to make confident statements regarding causality. (Woessmann, 2011, p. 74)

Determining Merit

Opposition to merit pay can be traced to the fear of teacher attrition (Sawchuk, 2009). Sawchuk (2009) asserted that attrition can occur when teachers feel it is unfair to determine their pay based on the performance of their students. Those who oppose have argued that students are not the same from state-to-state, district-to-district, school-to-school, or class-to-class; therefore, it is a great, almost unrealistic, expectation to require every student to attain academic excellence (Yuan et al., 2013). Merit pay systems use various calculation methods used to calculate growth and achievement, even though some are unclear according to Tricia Coulter, the director of the Teaching Quality and Leadership Institute at the Denver-based Education Commission of the States (ECS) (Jacobson, 2006). Several of these methods will be discussed in the following section; however, Rothstein (2005) asserted that merit-based pay systems should combine both quantitative and qualitative measures to appropriately determine merit.

Although student achievement has been commonly used as criterion in merit pay systems, teachers have generally not been assessed on whether or not they moved every student to a level of proficiency (Welner, 2008). Welner provided an example to understand this concept. "A school with students who arrive in September with poor scores on previous tests may provide excellent instruction and may even raise students' scores considerably yet still have few students reach proficiency" (p. 6). He further explained that teachers should be assessed on whether or not they moved their students at all and was there some type of measurable growth. "Growth modeling changes the

question from ‘Was Mary's score proficient?’ to ‘Did Mary's score increase?’ It tries to quantify students' change in performance and, in many cases, attribute those changes to particular teachers and schools” (Welner, 2008, p. 6). In order to ensure fairness and validity, the calculation of growth must be done in the same way (Merrow, 2007). Merrow provided an analogy about how his family used the same yard stick to measure how tall each child in the house had grown every two weeks to describe how districts should measure growth. “In other words, to have a valid growth model, schools need what families have: a common yardstick” (Merrow, 2007, p. 40).

A popular model that has been used to calculate student growth is the Value-Added model (Carlo, 2012).

> Value-added models are a specific type of growth model, a diverse group of statistical techniques to isolate a teacher's impact on his or her students' testing progress while controlling for other measurable factors, such as student and school characteristics, that are outside that teacher's control. (p. 39)

Rothman (2010) supported the value-added model because it can easily do several types of student growth calculations. When determining student growth, several different variables must be factored into the calculations, which makes this task much more complex. He mentioned that a simpler model could not handle numerous real-world problems, such a student attrition, sharing of students, co-teaching, and teachers that teach multiple subjects (Rothman, 2010). However, Carlo (2012) opposed this model because these “models are unreliable and invalid and have absolutely no business at all in teacher evaluations, especially high-stakes evaluations that guide employment and compensation decisions” (p. 39).

Another model used to calculate student growth is Student Growth Percentiles (Shang, 2012). In this model, students are not compared with how well they do with all students in a particular grade for that school year. However, they are compared with their academic peers--tudents who begin at the same place academically. According to Shang, the model was approved by the U.S. Department of Education for use in Colorado and other states to calculate student achievement as part of the Growth Model Pilot. Shang (2012) discussed negative aspects of this model and "unequal biases of growth percentile estimation caused by measurement errors for students at different achievement levels" (p. 448).

Non-tested Teachers

Merit pay systems are based on the performance of the teacher (Slotnik, 2009). Therefore, there must be a way to measure performance (Johnson & Papay, 2010). Performance measurement of teachers is usually done by the performance of students on high-stakes testing; however, this accounts for only about 31% of teachers (New Pay Plan, 2006). So, what about "the Other 69%" (p. 2), a common name given to non-tested teachers who teach subjects that are not assessed by some type of standardized testing? (Watson, Kraemer, & Thorn, 2009). According to Watson et al. (2009), this is a major issue with many performance-based compensation models, and there must be a fair way to hold all teachers accountable and measure performance in similar ways. Watson et al. (2009) added that many states, including Mississippi, do not have a clear way to measure performance based on student growth for teachers whose students do not participate in high-stakes testing. In response, some states and/or districts have used Student Learning

Objectives (SLOs). According to the Ohio Department of Education (2013), a student learning objective is:

> …a measurable, long-term academic growth target that a teacher sets at the beginning of the year for all students or for subgroups of students. SLOs demonstrate a teacher's impact on student learning within a given interval of instruction based upon baseline data gathered at the beginning of the course. (Ohio Department of Education, 2013)

SLOs are a fairly new concept in education, so there is little research available on this topic (Thaler, Kazemi, & Huscher, 2009). Thaler et al. (2009) added that because of its relative newness, many educational systems are reluctant to use this method as a way to determine growth. Other states and districts have fully developed SLO systems, such as the Austin Independent School District in Austin, Texas (Austin Independent School District Student Learning Objectives, 2013). Since these SLOs are usually set by individual teachers, it is impossible to ensure that all SLO's have the same rigor for teachers within the same school, district, or state (Austin Independent School District Student Learning Objectives, 2013). When SLOs are used, teachers have a lot of flexibility regarding the criteria upon which their performance is evaluated; this has been one of the criticisms of the process, especially when SLOs are based on oral and visual presentations, group work and discussions, final projects, written reports, and other culminated student work (Thaler et al., 2009). Since informed decisions, like merit pay and continued employment, are made with the combined results of SLOs and other measures, it is important for districts and states to have a detailed, explicit set of

standards for governing how SLOs will be implemented, and to have in place a systematic way to evaluate them (U. S. Department of Education, 2011).

Teacher Evaluation

Another component of performance-based compensation systems is the evaluation of teacher practice (Hassel & Katzir, 2010). Since teachers play such an important role in the learning process, it is imperative that teachers perform their jobs at the highest level of professionalism and use best practices to improve the learning of every student (Niels, 2012). Many states are focusing on reforming the way teachers are evaluated, mainly because of the push from the Race to the Top, which was a contest implemented by the U. S. Department of Education for states to apply for funding to revamp their K-12 education programs (Stern, 2013). Educator performance was a primary focus of Race to the Top (Shakman et al., 2012).

In order to determine if a teacher is performing to the district or school's expectations, there must be some way to evaluate a teacher's performance (Marzano, 2012b). Marzano (2012b), suggested that there are different models used to evaluate teachers, and the school or district must determine which model is best based on the specific behaviors each teacher should exemplify. According to Marzano (2012b), although districts and states are quickly moving to revamp and redesign their teacher evaluation systems, they must acknowledge that there is a difference between "measuring" teachers and "developing" teachers. These aspects of teacher evaluation (developing vs. measuring) are totally different and serve different purposes; therefore, the evaluation system used to assess a teacher should not mirror an evaluation system used to develop a teacher professionally (Marzano, 2011). Marzano (2011) further

emphasized the necessity of having a common teacher evaluation tool. "As far as measuring effective teaching, the best thing to do is start with a strong language or model of instruction that everybody in the district, ideally, or in a school, at least, agrees with" (Marzano, 2011, p. 36). Additionally, the teacher evaluation system should be valid (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013). Using various measures increases the validity and reliability of an evaluation system. "Validity in this case means that the assigned values or statistical estimates in question measure what they claim to the effect a teacher has on her students' achievement growth over the course of the year" (Baker et al., 2013, p. 5).

Most teacher evaluation models have certain basic components on which teachers are evaluated, such as: preparation, teaching strategies, classroom environment, and professionalism (Marzano, 2012b). These major evaluation areas are known as domains. Domains are divided into standards which identify specific behaviors teachers are expected to perform, such as in Marzano's Model, Danielson's Model, and M-STAR. Each model will be discussed in the following section. Models differ greatly in the number of domains, standards, and tiers they include. Standards are the individual tasks and responsibilities on which the teacher is to be evaluated (Danielson, 2010). Next, tiers refer to the levels of performance in the evaluation model. For example, a model may have 4 tiers, such as: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished (Danielson, 2010).

Marzano (2011) created the Casual Teacher Evaluation Model that has been widely used to evaluate teacher performance. This model incorporates 4 domains (overarching categories of the evaluation system) and 60 elements (known as standards in other models). The 4 domains of this system are classroom strategies and behaviors,

planning and preparing, reflecting on teaching, and collegiality and professionalism (Marzano, 2012a). The model was based on Marzano's assertion that a teacher evaluation system must contain a "robust language of instruction" (Marzano, 2011, p. 36). For example, Domain 1 Element 2 describes the teacher's role in tracking progress as "the teacher facilitates tracking of student progress on one or more learning goals using a formative approach to assessment" (Marzano, 2012a, p. 27). Another widely used teacher evaluation model was created by Charlotte Danielson, Framework for Teaching, and includes 4 domains and 22 standards (Danielson, 2010). The 4 domains are planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities, which are similar to those in the Marzano Model. Danielson's model includes a detailed system that incorporates all essential areas of instruction and stresses the importance of properly training evaluators on how to evaluate teachers. "A credible system of teacher evaluation requires higher levels of proficiency of evaluators than the old checklist, "drive-by" observation model. Evaluators need to be able to assess accurately, provide meaningful feedback, and engage teachers in productive conversations about practice" (Danielson, 2010, p. 38). Many states and districts have created their own specific teacher evaluation model adopted from the Danielson model. Examples of teacher evaluation systems based on Danielson's work include statewide teacher evaluation systems in Mississippi, Delaware, and Idaho; and district-wide systems used in Chicago Public Schools and Cincinnati Public Schools (Sartain, Stoelinga, Brown, & Consortium on Chicago Schools, 2011).

Marzano (2012b) shared three characteristics that should be a part of any teacher evaluation system. The first characteristic is that the system is comprehensive and

specific. "Comprehensive means the model includes all those elements that research has identified as associated with student achievement. Specific means the model identifies classroom strategies and behaviors at a granular level" (Marzano, 2012b, p. 16). The second characteristic is that the system includes a developmental scale. Marzano proposed that the evaluation system should provide teachers with a rubric or scale with specific indicators and characteristics to help them determine their own skill level (Marzano, 2012b). The final characteristic is that the system should acknowledge and reward growth. This allows teachers to identify areas of growth and create growth goals to address these areas (Marzano, 2012b).

Niels (2012) shared the importance of improving teacher evaluation when merit pay is involved. According to Niels, a teacher evaluation system should promote open and honest conversations about strengths and weaknesses of the teacher. Niels added that this open and honest dialogue may actually be hindered by involving the component of merit pay. Niels provided questions that could lead to good dialogue between the teacher and administrator surrounding teacher growth and improvement and the hindrances to this conversation. The questions address the teacher's pedagogical practices, measurement of student learning, and lesson content (Niels, 2012). Niels asserted that the answers to these questions would be less honest if teachers are concerned about compensation tied to their performance.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supported continuous research on teacher evaluation through the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project. The findings of this project led to some generalized conclusions about teacher evaluation. According to Marshall (2012), there are three factors that the teacher should be assessed on: classroom

observations, student achievement gains, and feedback from students. Using multiple measures can compensate for the discrepancies of individual measures to produce a more accurate evaluation with more useful data. However, Marshall cautioned that a couple of walk-through evaluations per year would be insufficient, and that there must be multiple measures used to evaluate teachers because each individual measure has its unique set of flaws.

Not surprisingly, MET researchers found that one classroom observation a year did not provide an accurate picture of a teacher's work. Their findings suggested that effective teacher evaluation systems should include: using a good rubric for observations, observing teachers at least four times a year, having more than one observer evaluate each teacher, and improving administrator training (Marshall, 2012). Additionally, formally planned observations may not provide an accurate representation of a teacher's evaluation. "Often times, the teacher prepares his or her best lesson because the principal is coming, and the students generally act better when the principal is present" (Marshall, 2012, p. 50). According to Marshall (2012), during a planned observation, the administrator is not seeing what really happens every day in the classroom. As a result, he or she cannot accurately determine the type of development or assistance teachers need in order to positively affect their performance, which in turn can positively impact student achievement. What occurs daily in the classroom is what has a direct effect on student achievement, so the daily occurrences are what the administrator should see and evaluate to develop the teacher (Marshall, 2012). Marshall (2012) has also stressed the importance of accurate evaluations and how they are directly related to improving student achievement. She suggested that administrators should make at least ten brief,

unannounced visits to each teacher to view the beginning, middle, and end of lessons; different subject areas or classes; and different times of the day and week. Marshall (2012) added that these brief visits should be followed by conversation and written documentation in order to assist the teacher with improving his or her practice.

According to Gabriel and Allington (2012), effective teacher evaluation and professional development must be ongoing and continuous, not once a year. Marshall emphasized that all of a teacher's evaluations should be completed by the same person, which is different to the method used in MET who support different evaluators. Having the same evaluator eliminates the potential issue having feedback that contradicts that of another administrator, which will be ineffective for the teacher (Marshall, 2012).

Culbertson (2012) of TAP (Teacher Advancement Program), the System for Teacher and Student Advancement, discussed methods of evaluating teachers through their performance-based evaluation system. Culbertson first stressed the need to link teacher evaluation directly to professional development (Culbertson, 2012). TAP's approach to teacher evaluations involves a "cadre of teacher leaders" that includes mentor and master teachers and the principal (p. 14). All are responsible for developing and evaluating teachers. "TAP's approach to teacher evaluation has two equally important goals: accurately measuring teacher performance and improving teacher skills through individualized, intensive support" (Culbertson, 2012, p. 14). Gabriel and Allington (2012) stressed that the key to teacher effectiveness must be ongoing support.

Culbertson (2012) added that each teacher should be evaluated several times a year, similar to the recommendation shared by Marshall. However, the TAP system of evaluation advocates that evaluations for each teacher should not be done by the same

person, which was supported by MET. TAP's evaluation system includes multiple classroom observations each year by multiple trained and certified evaluators, including principals or other administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers. According to Culbertson (2012), these planned evaluations must be followed by a post-evaluation conference to highlight the teacher's strengths and identify areas of development (Culbertson, 2012). Culbertson noted that having several trained evaluators per teacher would increase the amount of follow-up support teachers needed to perfect their craft. Additionally, having various evaluators ensures that scores are not inflated or invariable (Culbertson, 2012). Baker et al. (2013) asserted that multiple measures would ensure fairness and a greater level of accuracy in evaluation. According to Slotnik (2010), multiple measures assist the evaluator or district in attaining a higher standard of fairness and accuracy when determining a teacher or a school's impact on student growth. Multiple measures also enable a district to more deeply understand each student's achievement and to achieve a broader base of teacher and parent support (Slotnik, 2010).

The multiple measures of evaluation, having different evaluators, and opportunities for teacher growth have increased buy-in of the evaluation system among the educators (Slotnik, 2010). According to a master teacher interviewed by Culbertson (2012), old systems of evaluation were merely check-lists for basic things, such as how did the room look, did the students respond well to the teachers, and how well the teacher dressed, but nothing to help her become a better teacher. "In contrast, the TAP teaching standards contain sufficient details for teachers to acquire understanding of what performance looks like at various levels of expertise in a range of classroom practices and skills" (p. 16). The TAP rubric provides a five point scale with one being the lowest

level of performance and five being the highest level of performance. This intensive evaluation requires teachers to analyze student data, reflect on their teaching, and discover new instructional strategies. There is evidence to suggest that this system of evaluation has increased teacher value-added scores; however, implementation requires the work of the entire evaluation team and teachers (Culbertson, 2012). Culbertson explained that there must be many hours spent collaborating and calibrating among administrators to ensure evaluation is done fairly and consistently throughout the school or district. District administrators spend at least one month prior to the school year evaluating and analyzing evaluation measures to ensure the rating process is fair and consistent (Culbertson, 2012).

Shakman et al. (2012) at the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) of Pacific States completed a study on performance-based teacher evaluation systems in five states: Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Like Culbertson (2012), Shakman et al. (2012) also criticized the traditional forms of teacher evaluation that were mere checklists. "The widespread use of binary rating systems, in which teachers receive an overall rating of either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, has been criticized for lacking rigor, as nearly 99 percent of teachers in some districts earn satisfactory ratings" (Shakman et al., 2012, p. 1). The same view and type of results were shared by Sartain and her team (2011) who redesigned the teacher evaluation system in Chicago Public Schools. Sartain felt that old evaluation systems were not giving teachers meaningful feedback on their practice. Sartain added that it that it did not differentiate among best, good, and poor teachers.

> Chicago, for example, relied on a system that both teachers and principals viewed as arbitrary and unfair. Moreover, the system identified 93 percent of teachers as either Superior or Excellent—at the same time that 66 percent of CPS (Chicago Public Schools) schools were failing to meet state standards, suggesting a major disconnect between classroom results and classroom evaluations. (Sartain et al., 2011, p. 1)

Shakman et al. (2012) added that principals could usually accurately determine the most and least effective teachers, but lacked the ability to differentiate among those in between the extremes, thus the need for a more detailed and comprehensive system to evaluate teachers. Changes in teacher evaluation systems mandate that they be tied directly to student achievement and growth (Baker et al., 2013). Newly designed, comprehensive teacher evaluations systems and those of the states in Shakman's (2012) study must be of multiple measures, including measures of student growth, observations of teachers, analysis of teacher artifacts (such as lesson plans, assessments, assignments, rubrics, student work, or portfolios), peer review, student reflections and feedback, and participation in professional development. Participants of the study by Shakman et al. (2012) used a teacher evaluation system that included all or most of 10 basic standards related to the overall duties of the teacher created by InTASC (Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) which was formed through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards are common principles that can be used for all subjects and outline what every teacher should know and make certain that every student is equipped with the necessary skills needed to be successful to begin college or a vocation (Shakman et al., 2012). These standards provide a basis for improving student

achievement (Council of Chief State School, 2011). The standards are learner development, learning differences, learning environments, content knowledge, application of content, assessment, planning for instruction, instructional strategies, professional learning and ethical strategies, and leadership and collaboration. The states that participated in Shakman's study converted the standards into multiple measures to evaluate teachers. There was some differentiation among the other measures used. For example, Delaware was the only one in the group that did not have a professional growth component, and Georgia and Tennessee included the analysis of artifacts (Council of Chief State School, 2011).

M-STAR

Mississippi Department of Education mandated (as of the 2013-14 school year) that all districts use the same teacher evaluation instrument (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). The new system, M-STAR (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c), was first piloted in Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) districts in the state. It was created by the American Institutes of Research. M-STAR was developed through funding of the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund Grant (IMPACT MS, 2010). The grant required there be a rigorous evaluation system for teachers (IMPACT MS, 2010). As previously mentioned, the M-STAR rubric was adapted from the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. The rubric includes four domains and 20 standards. The domains are planning, assessment, instruction, learning environment, and professional responsibilities (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). There are four performance levels: distinguished, effective, emerging, and unsatisfactory (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c).

The first domain, planning, includes duties such as planning lessons, demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, and addressing the diverse needs of the students (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). The planning domain is an essential component of effective teacher practice because it ensures that teachers properly plan what students are to learn, be assessed on, and there is a clear match between instruction and assessment (Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011). The second domain is assessment. It evaluates how well the teacher creates and uses data from assessments and how well feedback is provided to students. According to Hori (2011), the teacher's ability to assess students appropriately can lead to improvement in the teacher's instruction and how the students learn. "Based on this understanding, the integration of instruction and evaluation becomes possible, leading to an improvement in teaching and learning" (Hori, 2011, p. 50). The third domain is instruction. This domain evaluates how well the teacher brings together his or her knowledge and resources to actively engage students in meaningful and varied instruction (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). According to Lunenburg and Irby (2011), "teacher behavior research has shown that teacher behaviors, as well as specific teaching strategies, make a difference with regard to student achievement" (p. 1). The fourth domain is the learning environment. This domain assesses the teacher's ability to manage space and resources (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). It addresses elements such as classroom management, spacing, and use of technology (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). Appropriate management of the classroom minimizes behavior and leads to greater student engagement (Cavanaugh, 2013).

The last domain is professional responsibilities. It addresses the duties outside of instruction, such as communicating with families, obtaining professional development, understanding the Mississippi Code of Ethics, and collaboration (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2010) emphasized the importance of teachers being responsible and taking initiative to improve their own practice without being required to do so by their supervisors: "While public education administrators have a responsibility to afford teachers professional working conditions, teachers have a reciprocal obligation to assume personal responsibility to improve their classroom practice" (p. 2). All of the domains make-up only part the M-STAR Teacher Evaluation System (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c).

There are other components of M-STAR, such as reviewing of artifacts, which was also used in the study by Shakman et al. (2012). Another component is pre/post observation conferences between the principal and the teacher, a practice that was found to be one of the most valuable tools in improving teacher quality in the Chicago pilot (Sartain et al., 2011. The standards are evaluated in different ways using the various components. Domain one of M-STAR is evaluated through viewing artifacts and during the pre/post conferences (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). Domain two is evaluated through viewing artifacts, pre/post observation, and student surveys (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). Student surveys are not factored into the overall score, but are used to provide an assessment from the students' perspective (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). Wiggins (2011) reported that many teachers had major issues with student surveys as a component of teacher evaluation, but argued that student feedback can be very beneficial to the teacher.

> I'm not saying that everything students say is correct or objective, either in this survey or in your own inquiries. In fact, answers are sometimes a bit inconsistent. It's feedback, for better or worse; it's the beginning of a conversation and it can reveal some interesting patterns. (Wiggins, 2011, p. 23)

The third and fourth domains are assessed through classroom observations and student surveys. The fifth domain is assessed through artifact review, pre/post conference, and by classroom observations (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). Each standard includes performance indicators to assist the evaluator in determining the appropriate level or rating. There is distinctive language at each level to differentiate among levels one through four (unsatisfactory through distinguished) (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c). The Mississippi Department of Education requires that every administrator be properly trained before implementing the M-STAR evaluation system at his or her school. M-STAR training began in the 2012-13 school year for administrators across the state. During the 2013-14 school year, M-STAR was the pilot in all schools in the state with full implementation set for the 2014-15 school year (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013c).

Principal Evaluation

Evaluation is a major component of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant for teachers and principals (Sawchuk, 2010b). Each state that received TIF funds had to explain how the state would revamp educator evaluation to create a state-wide model (Jerald, 2010). Race to the Top and NCLB were examples of reforms implemented by the U. S. Department of Education that caused states and educators to revamp educator training, support, and evaluation (Briggs et al., 2012). However, many states are so

focused on the teacher evaluation systems that they are failing to ensure principals are being thoroughly evaluated, but their role in student achievement is just as important because they are a part of the instructional team (Connelly, 2013). "Principal evaluation has been part of a national policy focus for the past decade, but it has been largely overshadowed by controversial developments in teacher evaluation…" (Clifford & Ross, 2012a, p. 6). Briggs et al. (2012) acknowledged that one-third of a school's total impact on student achievement can be attributed to teacher influence. However, Briggs et al. (2012) asserted that it is the principal who ensures that there is a strong teacher in every class. Although principals are not providing direct instruction to the students, they set the climate in the school for instruction and learning (Williams, Persuad, & Turner, 2008).

Like teacher evaluation systems, Clifford and Ross (2012b) criticized current systems of principal evaluation because the systems have not provided useful information about a principal's ability to lead and manage a school effectively; yet critical decisions are made from these systems.

> When evaluation does occur, principals often describe it as a rote exercise, rather than a valuable learning experience. Within states and districts, principals might not be evaluated against the same criteria or using the same processes. Thus, the current "system" for principal evaluation is no system at all. As such, high-stakes decisions about principal performance are challenging to make. (Clifford & Ross, 2012b, p. 17)

Goldring et al. (2009) concluded that comprehensive research on principal evaluation has shown that little supports that current methods for evaluating principals are effective. Principals cannot be expected to be the catalysts of educational reforms in their buildings

if they are not being provided with accurate analyses of their actual leadership skills and given tools to help them grow and develop (Briggs et al., 2012). Hassel and Katzir (2010) advised that grant recipients of TIF should use the resources that the grant provides to improve on teacher and principal evaluation. Hassel and Katzir (2010) emphasized that no measuring tool is perfect; however, they recommended that educators should expose the flaws in the evaluations systems and make the necessary improvements (Hassel & Katzier, 2010). Zubrzycki (2013) emphasized the need for consistency in principal evaluation to ensure that administrators are being evaluated on the same essential criteria. The entire principal evaluation system should include multiple measures, such as: professional qualities and practices, professional growth and learning, school culture and climate, stakeholder satisfaction, and student educational outcomes (Clifford & Ross, 2012b). Zubrzycki (2013) suggested that although multiple measures should be used to evaluate principals, there should be more weight attributed to a principal's practices and behaviors than to student growth. Clifford and Ross (2012a) also emphasized the importance of using multiple measures when evaluating principals. "Due to the complexity of a principal's job, principals want and need substantive feedback that is comprehensive, accurate, valid, and useful. Areas of performance must be identified using comprehensive data gathered from multiple sources" (Clifford & Ross, 2012a, p. 37).

As teacher and principal performance has become the center of education reform, Williams et al. (2008) have found four central principles that have developed through continuous research conducted on principal evaluation. These include focusing more on how the evaluation is done than the instrument used, establishing and maintaining

positive relationships between the administrators and their evaluators, increasing principal support of the process by effectively using both formative and summative practices of evaluation, and ensuring that the evaluation criteria is directly linked to specifics goals (Williams et al., 2008). If implemented correctly, teacher evaluations and principal evaluations can lead to "an enhanced culture of learning for the adults in a school as well as for students" (Connelly, 2013, p. 52). To ensure evaluations are implemented correctly, Hassel and Katzir (2010) recommended that the principal evaluations be practical and informative for principals, incorporate the opinions of principals, be valid and reliable, be based on commonly recognized standards, be explicitly communicated to all administrators, allow for flexibility depending on the needs of the local district, and be incorporated in the district's human resources policies and procedures (Clifford & Ross, 2012b). According to Clifford and Ross (2012b), these guidelines for principal evaluation were developed through an evaluation initiative launched by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Clifford and Ross (2012a) shared that the collective mission of these two organizations was to put "principals at the center of fair and equitable principal evaluations systems" (p. 36) as the guidelines were developed. There should be differentiation in the type of evaluation used for principals and it should be based on the stage they are at in their career or experience (Zubrzycki, 2013).

According to Goldring et al. (2009), in principal evaluation, educators must understand that there is a differentiation between assessment and evaluation. These authors concluded that assessment is merely a part of the overall process. "Assessment is

a measurement practice based on certain preset criteria. It is different from evaluation, which is a more complex process that involves making judgments and taking the assessment results into account" (Goldring et al., 2009, p. 20). Since the Teacher Incentive Fund Grant focuses on achievement, it is imperative to evaluate principals on duties that have shown to be effective in increasing student learning and achievement, which include things such as garnering staff support to bring about positive change to the learning environment, strategically placing staff members in positions that exercise their strengths, developing staff members professionally, and implementing initiatives and school-wide plans that meet all student needs (Williams et al., 2008).

Some principal evaluation systems require that principals are evaluated by both their supervisors and by those they supervise and the principal completes a self-evaluation through created surveys or systems like the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) (Porter et al., 2010a). Porter et al. (2010b) defined the VAL-ED as a 360-degree assessment used to gather information on a principal's leadership behaviors as it combines responses from teachers, the principal (self-evaluation), and the principal's supervisor. According to Porter et al. (2010b), the VAL-ED measures key components which are characteristics every principal should have to support the learning of students and improve teacher quality. The principal must also be able to effectively manage these components (Porter et al., 2010b). Olson (2008) described the six core components on which principals are evaluated through the VAL-ED:

1. High standards for student learning: Individual, team, and school goals for rigorous academic and social learning are set.

2. Rigorous curriculum: Ambitious academic content is provided to all students in core academic subjects.

3. Quality instruction: Effective instructional practices maximize academic and social learning.

4. Culture of learning and professional behavior: Communities of professional practice promote student academic and social learning. A healthy school environment makes student learning the central focus.

5. Connections to external communities: Schools forge linkages to families and other people and institutions in the community that advance academic and social learning.

6. Performance accountability: Leadership holds itself and others responsible for realizing high standards of student academic and social performance. The professional staff and the school's students exercise individual and collective responsibility.

Porter et al. (2010b) noted that these six components were intentionally created to measure a principal's behavior, rather than just attitudes and beliefs, because their behaviors "affect school processes and ultimately student learning" (p. 284). Although the VAL-ED assessment produces useful data information on a principal's leadership behaviors, it is not meant to be used as the sole system of evaluation; rather it should be used in conjunction with another assessment and other measures of evaluation (Porter et al., 2010b).

Professional Development

Professional development is a significant component of the MS TIF grant and most performance-based compensation systems (Sawchuk, 2010c). The U.S. TIF required all recipients to address professional development in their proposals (Jerald, 2010). Jerald (2010) discussed the importance of all components (incentive pay, evaluation, professional development, career ladders) linking together as one cohesive performance-based compensation system. However, Jerald (2010) asked, "But does TIF encourage actual alignment among compensation, evaluation, and professional development, or does it merely require grantees to include 'multiple components' without ensuring that various human resources elements truly support and reinforce one another?" (p. 12). The results from the MS TIF grant and others will be used to answer this question. In fact, the key focus of several educational reforms, such as Race to the Top, Teacher Incentive Fund, School Improvement Grant, and the state Fiscal Stabilization fund, was to improve student achievement by improving teacher quality through targeted, high-quality professional development (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, & Goe, 2011). According to research, effective and collaborative professional development is one of the key characteristics that distinguishes high performing, high poverty schools from low performing, high poverty schools (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). According to Dash, De Kramer, O'Dwyer, Masters, and Russell (2012), professional development has the potential to greatly improve teacher practice, thus affecting student achievement directly. This positively affects student achievement when the professional development is embedded in the daily practices of teachers,

focuses on increasing teacher content knowledge, and enhances student learning (Dash et al., 2012).

Sawchuk (2010c) also added that since professional development is critical to improving the practice for both teachers and principals, it should be directly related to their individual systems of evaluation. Administrators should no longer view professional development and teacher evaluation as separate entities, but connect them to enhance teacher practice (Gurensey & Ochshorn, 2011). Goe, Biggers, Croft & National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2012) provided six components for effectively using teacher evaluation to determine professional development. These include more rigorous instruction, multiple measures of evaluation, intense training, precise analysis of data with targeted professional development, and high expectations for learning (Goe et al., 2012).

According to Johnson and Papay (2010), significant growth should not be expected if the appropriate support is not put in place for schools participating in reforms such as TIF. Odden and his colleagues (n.d., as cited in Jerald, 2010) concluded that in research studies with regard to merit pay there were only modest or little achievement results when the performance-based pay system was based on pay alone without professional development. "Based on these school districts' experiences, Odden and his colleagues conclude that 'a revised teacher and principal pay structure by itself will have a modest effect if the other parts of the human resource management system are not realigned'" (Jerald, 2010, p. 10). Johnson and Papay (2010) stressed the importance of professional development as an essential component of the tiered merit pay system. Professional development should be meaningful, ongoing, and should allow teachers to

gain new skills that would assist them in advancing careers and to take on new challenges and responsibilities (Johnson & Papay, 2010). Marsh and McCaffrey (2011) completed an in-depth study on merit pay and also criticized performance-based compensation systems that only include pay without other components. The researchers concluded that their findings show no effects on student achievement when financial gain was the only thing implemented without other components, such as professional development and a good teacher evaluation system (Marsh & McCaffrey, 2011).

Professional development for teachers and principals should be targeted and linked to commonly-accepted professional based standards, such as the standards outlined by NCLB (Holt, 2001). NCLB provided five requirements of professional development to ensure that it was of high quality. These standards include sustainability and content focused information when they are tied to assessments, increase content knowledge of teachers, provide teachers with research-based practices, and are continuously updated and improved upon (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapely, 2007).

Holt (2001) discussed a conversation during a national meeting with governors and businesses in which the common thought was that teachers should be given additional compensation for attending professional development that was standards-based. This was similar to a system discussed by Blair (2001) that was introduced in Cincinnati. There was a need for extensive professional development before the system was fully entered to ensure that teachers understood the evaluation process itself, the standards, and the effects of the results. The professional growth of teachers was greatly emphasized to improve their practice and their student learning. In a Minnesota

performance-based compensation system, teachers worked directly with mentors who evaluated them several times per year and offered ongoing professional development in the areas of improvement (Honawar, 2007). The Quality Compensation initiative emphasized professional development as a major component of educational reform to shift the focus away from incentive pay (Honawar, 2007).

Professional development does not have to be face-to-face meetings in order to be effective for teachers; it can also be integrated professional development in the form of common planning periods, teacher mentoring, academic coaches, observations, and individual or group research projects (Chambers, Lam, & Mahitivanichcha, 2008). Another way professional development can be delivered is online (Dash et al., 2012). Matzat (2013) added "that there are several examples of effective professional development, for instance through computerized professional development tools, collaborative teaching practices (for instance in Second Life), or blended courses" (p. 41). Smith and Sivo (2012) offered several reflective and important thoughts on professional development, more specifically, online professional development which tie in professional development, teacher practice, student achievement, and fiscal accountability. Online learning can allow schools to save money by enrolling teachers into professional development related to their individual needs (Smith & Sivo, 2012). According to Smith and Sivo (2012), districts should not allow financial challenges to prevent professional learning; they should use other options, such as e-learning. "Online professional development has been championed as the 'anytime, anywhere' option that provides flexibility by allowing participants, irrespective of location, to manage educational pursuits with work and personal responsibilities" (Dash et al., 2012, p. 3).

Smith and Sivo (2012) added that it is important to understand if a teacher is accepting of this format of delivery in order for online professional development to be effective.

Guskey (2007) observed that he consistently found that no improvements were made in education when there was no professional development because it is essential for improvement of teacher quality, which improves student performance. To increase students' academic performance, teachers must participate in ongoing professional development that enhances their skills and content knowledge. Bruder (2013) promoted online professional development because there are a variety of videos, courses, and tutorials that cover every aspect of a teacher's duties, such as creating tests, classroom management, organization of the class, and content specific videos.

The professional development component of MS TIF, whether online or face-to-face, is stressed as highly-important because if teachers have more tools and knowledge to improve instruction, this will link directly to improved student learning and achievement not merit pay alone (Honawar, 2007). According to research, effective and collaborative professional development is one of the key characteristics that distinguishes high performing, high poverty schools from low performing, high poverty schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). This structure for high-quality professional development must be ongoing and shared among states, districts, and schools. There must be collaboration of continuous learning for all educators in order to improve the quality of teaching, thus effecting student growth (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Another component of the Mississippi TIF Grant is Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to increase collaboration among the instructional staff to promote achievement (IMPACT MS, 2010). The overall goal of a PLC is to improve teacher practice, which will have a direct effect on student achievement ("Learning to Improve," 2012). The term first appeared in literature in the early 1990s; however, it was primarily used in the business sector until the late 1990s (Leclerc, Moreau, Dumouchel, & Sallafranque-St-Louis, 2012). Several experts in the field of education and promoters of the PLC concept declare that there is no true definition of it, which causes much confusion over the meaning and function (Jones et al., 2013). Also, the term is often used to describe a team of teachers or educators working together; however, often times it is not a true professional learning community (Dufour, 2004). There are a few definitions that are often used to describe what PLCs are and should do. A professional learning community is a continuous collaboration of teachers and administrators who enhance their learning environment by focusing on data, have open conversations about instruction, and who have a common vision of meeting student needs through reflection and practice (Jones et al., 2013). Jones and colleagues (2011) added that PLCs can be a wonderful tool of professional development for teachers if properly implemented and supported by the principal. Teaching and learning both take on different roles when PLCs are first implemented in any educational entity (Wells & Feun, 2013). The discussion and understanding of these changes among all involved parties is crucial to the development and sustainability of the process. Teachers must break down those walls of working alone and not sharing best practices with other teachers, and must be open and

honest enough to share what has worked for them and what has not so they can change their practice to meet the needs of their individual students (Wells & Feun, 2013).

There is a standard process for a PLC meeting, which is usually to focus on a shared problem, concern, or area of improvement within the school environment. Once this topic is identified, the group applies their personal experiences, knowledge, and research to strategize on methods to solve these issues or use new practices to address them (Hellner, 2008). Hellner also reported that this method of collective learning among teachers causes the group to "look deeply into the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work with students" (Hellner, 2008, p. 3). According to Servage (2008), PLC's must include certain criteria in order to be effective in a school environment. That criteria is targeted professional development that produces positive student outcomes and collaboration among the staff on professional development and creating unique learning experiences to address problems in learning. In theory, Servage (2008) concluded that PLCs will lead to improved best practices and will positively affect student outcomes.

DuFour (2004), an expert on PLCs in the education field, shared the three big ideas educators can use to implement and manage PLCs in any school environment. The first big idea is to ensure that all students learn, which is the purpose of education (DuFour, 2004). The process involves discussing what and how students will learn and anticipating the challenges that may occur. The second big idea is that all parties involved must recognize that a culture for sharing and working together collaboratively is vital for the PLC to fulfill its purpose (DuFour, 2004). DuFour (2004) added that this type of working together is for more than just the sake of learning to work with others for

the sake of consensus building; it must be strictly for the purpose of improving student achievement. The final big idea is that educators must focus on results. There should be a school focus and a more defined focus for each PLC that links directly to improving student achievement and teacher practice (DuFour, 2004). The implementation of PLCs in any environment can be quite challenging, which makes it easy for those involved to quit before they start to see results (Jones et al., 2013). One issue is determining the best time to meet that is feasible for all or most team members (Jones et al., 2013). Often when it is done after school, teachers are not as focused and use the time to do other things, like grade papers or only sit and listen without offering any valuable input or feedback (Dever & Lash, 2013). It is recommended to have PLCs during common planning time (CPT) of both interdisciplinary teams and content area teams (Dever & Lash, 2013). In order for these meetings to be effective, the time must be intentionally planned, all attendees must be engaged and participate, and there must focused and strategic review and analyses of student work and teacher practice (Wells & Feun, 2013).

Summary

The review of literature has included research on the various components of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), which is a performance-based compensation system initiated by the U. S. Department of Education (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). The primary components of the grant include: performance-based compensation systems, teacher and principal evaluation, professional development, professional learning communities, and career ladders for teachers (IMPACT MS, 2010). There are various ways that school districts and states have implemented these types of systems (Johnson & Papay, 2010). It is reported that states or districts should not expect to see gains in

student achievement if financial incentive is the only factor of a performance-based pay system, but should employ the other components to create an effective program that develops and assesses teachers and principals and rewards them for their efforts in increasing the performance of students (Marsh & McCaffrey, 2011). Although many educational entities are moving toward using some type of performance-based compensation system to pay teachers, there is still much opposition toward this method of payment being appropriate for education (Kobakhidze, 2010). Those who oppose criticize that there is not enough research to properly determine that this system is effective and fair (Woessmann, 2011). It is also criticized because many of the components have not been made clear and consistent, such as evaluating teachers, evaluating principals, and determining student growth by teacher, especially those in non-tested subjects (New pay plan, 2006). Those who are in favor of it argue that the step compensation system is antiquated and does not reward teachers who are exceptional (Dee & Keys, 2004).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the design and methodology for this study. The purpose of the study was to understand educator perceptions of the MS TIF grant. Included in this chapter are (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) instrumentation, (d) procedures, (f) limitations, and (g) data analysis.

Research Design

The research study used quantitative measures to investigate the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund grant's (as a complete entity) relationship with the percent of proficiency on state standardized tests (MCT2), affect on educators' perceptions, and the educator's perceptions on individual components of the grant. Quantitative research tests objective theories by determining the relationship between two variables (Creswell, 2003). The main components (variables) of the Mississippi TIF Grant are:

1. Performance-based compensation
2. Professional Development
3. Professional Learning Communities
4. Career Ladders
5. Teacher and Principal Evaluation

Educator perceptions of all 5 components were analyzed to compare the perceptions of teachers with the perceptions of administrators.

Participants

The participants for this study included TIF Grant teachers and administrators from all 10 Mississippi TIF schools. Schools participating in the grant were selected by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) based on QDI scores for the 2009-10 school year. MDE contracted with IMPACT MS, an educational consultant group, to assist with management of the grant (IMPACT MS, 2010). According to IMPACT MS, MS TIF's goal was to improve achievement in 10 underperforming schools in the state by implementing various strategies, including a performance-based compensation system (IMPACT MS, 2010). In order for a school to apply, it would have to be considered a high-needs school, based on having more than 50% of its student population eligible for free or reduced lunch. Also, IMPACT MS reported that participant schools had to have lower student achievement than comparable schools. A total of 10 schools from seven school districts applied and met the criteria. In order to allow for within district comparisons, MDE allowed three districts to have two similar schools to participate in the grant (IMPACT MS, 2010).

The participants in this study included certified educators from all MS TIF grant schools. Within these schools, there are approximately 325 educators, including approximately 30 administrators. For the purpose of this research, administrators included principals, assistant principals, master teachers, mentor teachers, and professional development (PD) coordinators. Non-certified staff were not included in this study.

Instrumentation

In order to determine educators' perception of the MS TIF Grant and individual components, a questionnaire created by the researcher was used to gather information from educators at the 10 participating schools. The researcher developed the Mississippi TIF Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire (Appendix A) based on the components of the TIF Grant and a review of literature. To ensure validity, an expert panel of educators who are familiar with the TIF Grant and its components reviewed the survey and offered feedback on the instrument and its appropriateness towards its desired purpose. The expert panel consisted of MS TIF grant administrators and consultants. Each panelist was asked to review the entire questionnaire, but each had a primary section to critique based on his or her experience and role with the MS TIF grant. The panelists were asked to carefully examine the area of focus to ensure that the questions covered the major areas and projects of the pilot. Panelist One had more than 30 years in the field of education and served for 4 years as the Project Director of the Mississippi TIF grant. Panelist One's focus of the instrument was the MS TIF grant overall and evaluation. Panelist Two had more than 30 years in the field of education and served for 4 years as the Assistant Project Director of the Mississippi TIF Grant. Panelist Two's focus of the instrument was professional learning communities. Panelist Three had more than 30 years of experience in the field of education and served as the professional development consultant for the Mississippi TIF grant. Panelist Three's focus of the instrument was the professional development section. Panelist Four had more than 20 years of experience in education and has worked with the Mississippi TIF grant as the performance-based compensation consultant. Panelist Four's primary focus of the questionnaire was the

performance-based compensation section. Panelist Five had more than 15 years of experience in the field of education and has worked with several states with the TIF as a consultant. Panelist Five's primary focus of the questionnaire was the career ladders section. The researcher used recommendations from the panel of experts to make changes to the draft questionnaire, such as adding additional questions, deleting questions that were redundant, and adding more clarity to certain questions.

To ensure reliability, a small pilot study was conducted with former TIF educators with similar demographics as the participants in this study. The results of the pilot study were analyzed for Cronbach's alpha to examine the reliability of the instrument. Each section of the questionnaire was examined. The reliability for MS TIF grant overall was .756. The reliability for performance-based compensation was .715. The reliability for professional development was .841. The reliability for professional learning communities was .742. The reliability for career ladders was .782. The reliability for evaluation was .915. The Cronbach's alpha was greater than .70, therefore the instrument was reliable.

The Mississippi TIF Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire collected educator demographic information and data related to the five components of the TIF grant via an electronic survey using Qualtrics. There are 40 total questions. Questions 1-3 are demographic questions. Questions 3-38 use a Likert scale to collect data about educator perceptions on the various MS TIF Grant components. The values are: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree. Questions 39 and 40 asked the educators to specifically identify which component they feel is most and least

effective. Table 3 illustrates which questions relate to each variable measured in this study.

Table 3

Variables and Questions

Variable	Questions that measure the variable
MS TIF Grant overall	34 35 36 37 38 39 40
Performance-based compensation	4 5 6 7 8 9
Professional Development	10 11 12 13 14 15
Professional Learning Communities	16 17 18 19 20 21
Career Ladders	22 23 24 25 26 27
Evaluation	28 29 30 31 32 33

The electronic (and paper) survey asked questions directly tied to principal and teacher perceptions of the implementation of the MS TIF grant. To understand the TIF's relationship with student achievement, data obtained from the Mississippi Department of Education Accountability school reports were used to compare the percent of students that scored a minimum of proficient on the Mississippi Curriculum Tests 2 (MCT2) at each TIF school before implementation of the grant (school years 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010) with the percent of students that scored a minimum of proficient on the MCT2 after implementation of the grant (school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013).

Procedures

The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the study (Appendix B). To begin collecting data from certified educators at each Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) school, each superintendent of MS TIF schools was emailed a letter (Appendix C) requesting his or her permission to invite educators in the TIF school(s) in the district to participate in the study. A sample cover letter to explain the procedures to the educators was included with the letter to the superintendent (Appendix D). An approval letter was obtained from the superintendent of each school district containing participating TIF schools (Appendix E). The schools were identified by information provided by the Mississippi Department of Education on the TIF grant. Principals at each TIF school were contacted to notify each of the superintendent's approval to participate in the study. Each principal was asked to designate a teacher at the school to assist with ensuring that all staff were invited to complete the questionnaire. The school staff with the greatest participation received a free back-to-school luncheon as an incentive to participate in the study. The instrument (Appendix A) was sent electronically via email to each principal and designee at each school along with a cover letter that stated the purpose of the study (Appendix D). The letter assured the subjects' confidentiality rights as participants and informed them that their participation was voluntary. The designee provided the researcher with the email address of each certified person on his or her staff. The researcher sent an email explaining the study, informed consent statement, and a link to complete the survey electronically. Each school was sent a different link to the same survey to determine percentage of participation. A paper version of the questionnaire with a stamped, return-

addressed envelope was offered to be sent to the designee to disseminate to educators who do not have an email address. No one requested a paper copy. A box was placed in the main office of each TIF school for collection of the paper copy of the survey in case educators needed this option. The participants had three weeks from the date of distribution to complete the survey. At the completion of the second week, the staff at each school was sent an email from the researcher as a reminder of the questionnaire and incentive. One day prior to the completion of the third week period, the staff at each school was sent one last email via the researcher to encourage those who had not participated, but wanted to participate, to complete the questionnaire and to remind them of the incentive. At the completion of the study, the researcher informed the principal of the school with the highest percentage of staff participation and coordinated logistics of the incentive lunch for his or her staff.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey instrument was entered into SPSS for Windows version 22. A file of data was created for each participant and contained the following information: level of experience, work assignment, position, perceptions of the Mississippi TIF Grant, Performance-based compensation, Professional development, Professional Learning Communities, Career Ladders, and Evaluation. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to analyze the perceptions of the educators to determine if there is a difference between the two groups (administrators and teachers).

To determine the MS TIF Grant's relationship with student achievement in the ten participating schools, school achievement data from years before and during the grant implementation period were analyzed by comparing percent of students scoring a

minimum of proficient. Repeated measures ANOVA was used to compare school achievement for the TIF Schools before and during grant period. Repeated measures ANOVA was also used to compare each TIF school's minimum percent of MCT2 proficiency scores with a selected, similar public school that closely resembled its demographic make-up to determine if the level of growth of the TIF School was statistically significant when compared to another similar school (Appendix F). The comparison schools were selected because the demographic make-up, enrollment, rural/urban location, and percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch were similar to that of a particular Mississippi TIF school. The Mississippi Department of Education's website Reporting page contains school district and school information, such as enrollment, ethnic make-up, grade levels, and percent of students who scored proficient and advanced on the MCT2. This reporting information was used to identify schools with the characteristics that closely matched that of each TIF school.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Results

The purpose of this study was to understand principal and teacher perceptions on the implementation of the MS TIF grant and to determine if there was a significant relationship between the implementation of the MS TIF grant and percent of proficient scores. The Mississippi TIF (Teacher Incentive Fund) Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire was used to gather responses from the educators. The questionnaire was emailed electronically to all certified educators at the 10 Mississippi schools that participate in the MS TIF grant. The online survey system Qualtrics was used to gather educator responses to the questionnaire. Three hundred emails (N=300) were sent with the questionnaire information and the link to the questionnaire to MS TIF school certified personnel. Approximately 181 educators participated in the electronic questionnaire, representing 10 schools and 60.3% of the total number (N=300) that were sent to the educators. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of findings gathered from the questionnaire and comparison of test data.

Utilizing Qualtrics, the resulting quantitative data were used to answer the first six research questions and six hypotheses:

1. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_1: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant.

2. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Performance-based compensation component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_2: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Performance-based compensation component.

3. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Professional Development component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_3: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Professional Development component.

4. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Professional Learning Communities component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_4: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Professional Learning Communities component.

5. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Career Ladders component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_5: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Career Ladders component.

6. Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_6: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems component.

Data Analysis

Of the total 181 respondents, the number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire was 157 (86.7%). Approximately 24 administrators (13.3%) responded. Questions 1-3 of the questionnaire asked demographic information. As it related to years of experience, 39 (21.5%) respondents had 0-3 years, 49 (27.1%) had 4-10 years, 60 (33.1%) respondents had 11-20 years of experience, and 31 (17.1%) respondents had 21 or more years of experience. All respondents were full-time employees. Table 4 presents the position of participants, years of experience, and full/part-time status. For the purposes of this study, administrators referred to principals, assistant principals, master teachers, mentor teachers, and professional development coordinators.

Table 4

Position and Years of Experience

	Frequency	Percentage
Position		
Administrator	24	13.3
Teacher	157	86.7
Years of Experience		
0-3	39	21.5
4-10	49	27.1
11-20	60	33.1
21 +	31	17.1

The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions divided into seven subgroups: (a) participant background information; (b) performance-based compensation; (c) professional development; (d) professional learning communities; (e) educator evaluation; (f) career ladders; (g) Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant overall. The questionnaire was available online for educators to complete during late spring of the 2013-14 academic school year. Questions 3-38 on the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale to collect data about educator perceptions on the various MS TIF Grant components. The following values were assigned to each response: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree. Questions 39 and 40 ask the educators to specifically identify which component they feel is most and least effective.

Table 5

Performance-based compensation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q4. The state's current pay structure (salary schedule based on years of experience and education level) is an adequate way to pay educators.	2.52	1.16
Q5. Incentive pay encourages me to improve my practice as an educator.	2.74	1.09
Q6. Merit pay will improve teacher practice if implemented properly.	3.01	1.15
Q7. Knowing that I may get extra pay encourages me to work harder.	2.84	1.09
Q8. I am knowledgeable of the performance-based incentive criteria of the TIF Grant.	1.99	.76
Q9. Every teacher in the state should be paid based on performance.	3.41	1.06

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The first construct of performance-based compensation has six questions on the questionnaire. The means range from 1.99 to 3.41 with standard deviations ranging from .76 to 1.16. Table 5 displays descriptive statistics for performance-based compensation. Question 9 had the highest mean of 3.41 in this section and of the entire questionnaire. This question asked should every teacher in the state be paid based on performance. This indicates that the majority feel that the traditional salary schedule may not be the best method of compensation for teachers, but a pay system that includes differentiated performance measures would be more effective. Question 8 had the lowest mean (1.99)

in this section which asked educators about their knowledge of the performance-based compensation criteria. This indicates that educators perceive that they have not been effectively trained and communicated with on the requirements for obtaining additional compensation through the grant.

The second construct of professional development has six questions on the questionnaire. Table 6 displays descriptive statistics for professional development. The means range from 2.21 to 2.33. The standard deviations range from .79 to .93. Since none of the means were above 3 (neutral), this indicates that a majority of the educators do not perceive the professional development opportunities offered by the grant as effective. Question 11 had the highest mean. This asked did quality and quantity of professional development increase once TIF was implemented. Although this was the highest mean in this section, the mean score indicates that educators were not pleased with the quality and quantity of professional development.

Table 6

Professional Development

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q10. The TIF Grant has provided effective professional development for my school.	2.24	.87
Q11. Since participation with the TIF Grant, the quality and quantity of professional development has increased at my school.	2.33	.93
Q12. The professional development sessions were of high quality.	2.30	.86
Q13. The professional development offered at my school meets the professional needs of the faculty.	2.23	.82
Q14. The professional development offered at my school meets my professional needs as an educator.	2.31	.86
Q15. The professional development offered at my school causes me to develop as an educator.	2.21	.79

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The third construct of professional learning communities has six questions. The means range from 1.84 to 2.46. The standard deviations range from .58 to 1.01. Table 7 displays the descriptive statistics for professional learning communities. Question 18 had the highest mean in this section which asked if educators were pleased with how professional learning communities were in their schools. Although it had the highest mean, the perception is not very favorable amongst the educators. The lowest mean was question 21 (1.84). This indicates that educators are very uncomfortable with discussing aspects of their instructional practice with colleagues.

Table 7

Professional Learning Communities

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q16. The use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) has increased collaboration among staff members at my school.	2.15	.89
Q17. Working collaboratively with other educators is encouraged and supported at my school.	1.85	.80
Q18. I am pleased with how PLCs work at my school.	2.46	1.01
Q19. PLCs have caused me to reflect upon my instructional practice.	2.18	.88
Q20. PLCs have caused me to change some aspect of my instructional practice.	2.19	.85
Q21. I am comfortable discussing components of my instruction with colleagues.	1.84	.58

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The fourth construct of career ladders has six questions. The means range from 2.08 to 2.56 with standard deviations ranging from .71 to 1.12. Table 8 displays the descriptive statistics for career ladders. The highest mean is Question 23 which discussed career individuals having a positive effect on the educational environment. The lowest mean was Question 22 which asked did the TIF grant create career ladders positions at their schools. This indicates that educators perceive these positions as ineffective.

Table 8

Career Ladders

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q22. The TIF Grant has created career ladder positions at my school, such as Master teacher, Professional Development coordinator, and Mentor teacher.	2.08	.71
Q23. The addition of the career ladder individuals has had a positive effect on the educational environment at my school.	2.56	.93
Q24. The mentor teacher is significant to enhancing the learning environment at my school.	2.54	.98
Q25. The master teacher is significant to enhancing the learning environment at my school.	2.37	1.12
Q26. The PD Coordinator is significant to enhancing the learning environment at my school.	2.53	1.02
Q27. After the TIF Grant ends, the district should find funds to ensure that career ladder positions will continue at my school.	2.38	.79

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The fifth construct of evaluation has six questions. The means range from 1.94 to 2.98. Question 29 has the highest mean. It asked was M-STAR an effective instrument to accurately assess the performance of teachers. The standard deviations range from .73 to 1.14. Although the mean indicates a negative perception of M-STAR, it is the most positive perception in this section. Question 28 had the lowest mean which asked did the grant change the way teachers were evaluated. This indicates that although M-STAR was created through the TIF grant, educators perceive it is not any different from the

evaluation systems that were used prior to M-STAR. Table 9 displays the descriptive statistics for evaluation.

Table 9

Evaluation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q28. The TIF Grant changed the way teachers and principals are evaluated at my school.	1.94	.73
Q29. M-STAR is an effective instrument to accurately assess the performance of teachers.	2.98	1.14
Q30. The implementation of M-STAR has positively impacted teacher practice at my school.	2.93	1.13
Q31. M-STAR caused me to make positive changes in my instruction.	2.71	1.06
Q32. Since using M-STAR, I receive more feedback from administrators related to my practice.	2.79	1.13
Q33. The VAL-ED principal survey provides an effective assessment of the principal(s) at my school.	2.67	1.02

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The sixth construct of the TIF grant overall has seven questions. Five of the questions used a Likert scale as the other questions. The means range from 2.20 to 3.06 with standard deviations ranging from .85 to 1.06. Question 38 had the highest mean. This question asked to what extent did educators perceive the TIF grant has a positive effect on teacher practice. This indicates that the majority of educators had a positive perception of the grant in the area of improving teacher practice. Question 36 had the lowest mean in this section. This question asked were educators pleased with the

implementation of the TIF grant. This indicates that educators have a negative perception of how the grant was implemented at their schools. Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics for the TIF grant overall.

Table 10

TIF Grant Overall

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q34. By the end of the TIF Grant, I believe my school will see significant gains in student achievement.	2.51	.96
Q36. Overall, I am pleased with the implementation of the TIF Grant at my school.	2.20	.85
Q37. The TIF Grant has positively affected student achievement at my school.	2.65	1.05
Q38. The TIF Grant has positively affected teacher practice at my school.	3.06	1.06

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

Questions 39 and 40 of the MS TIF Grant overall section asked the educators to identify which component is least and most effective in positively impacting student achievement and teacher practice. The majority of educators (N=67) perceived the professional development component as being most effective in improving teacher practice and student achievement. There were two components that educators perceived being least effective in improving teacher practice and student achievement. The majority of educators (N=57) perceived performance-based compensation and career ladders as the

least effective components in improving teacher practice and student achievement. Table 11 displays these findings.

Table 11

TIF Most and Least Effective Components

Component	Most Effective	Least Effective
Performance-based compensation	21	57
Evaluation	18	39
Professional Development	67	14
Professional Learning Communities	66	11
Career Ladders	3	57

Hypothesis Results

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_1: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant.

For research questions one through six, independent sample tests were used to analyze the perceptions of the educators to determine if there was a difference between the two groups (administrators and teachers). Questions 34 through 49 on the Mississippi TIF Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers of the MS TIF grant overall. As reported in table 12, administrators had a mean of 1.97 and a standard deviation of

.61, and a mean of 2.57 and a standard deviation of .73 for teachers. There is a statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant overall at the .05 level ($t(177) = 3.835$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Teachers had a higher perception of the Mississippi TIF grant than administrators.

Table 12

Educator Perceptions

Perceptions	Administrator		Teacher		*t*	*p*
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Overall TIF Grant	1.97	.61	2.57	.73	3.835	<.001
Performance-based Compensation	2.69	.76	3.04	.91	1.823	.07
Professional Development	1.82	.57	2.35	.74	3.366	.001
Professional Learning Communities	1.86	.53	2.15	.67	2.049	.042
Career Ladders	1.87	.47	2.48	.79	3.676	<.001
Evaluation	1.99	.46	2.61	.72	4.069	<.001

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Performance-based compensation component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_2: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Performance-based compensation component.

Questions four through nine on the questionnaire were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The mean for perceptions of performance-based compensation for administrators was 2.69 and a standard deviation of .61, and a mean of 3.04 and a standard deviation of .91 for teachers. As reported in table 12, the results indicate no statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(179) = 1.823$, $p = .07$). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The perceptions of administrators and teachers of the performance-based compensation component are the same.

Research Question 3: Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Professional Development component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_3: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Professional Development component.

Questions 10 through 15 on the questionnaire were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The mean for perceptions of professional development for administrators was 1.82 and a standard deviation of .57, and a mean of 2.35 and a standard deviation of .74 for teachers. As reported in table 12, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(179) = 3.366$, $p = .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Teachers had a higher perception of professional development than administrators.

Research Question 4: Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Professional Learning Communities component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_4: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Professional Learning Communities component.

Questions 16 through 21 on the questionnaire were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The mean for perceptions of professional learning communities for administrators was 1.86 and a standard deviation of .53, and a mean of 2.15 and a standard deviation of .67 for teachers. As reported in table 12, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(179) = 2.049$, $p = .042$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Teachers had a higher perception of professional learning communities than administrators.

Research Question 5: Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Career Ladders component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_5: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Career Ladders component.

Questions 22 through 27 on the questionnaire were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The mean for perceptions of career ladders for administrators was 1.87 and a standard deviation of .47, and a mean of 2.48 and a standard deviation of .79 for teachers. As reported in table 12, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and

teachers ($t(179) = 3.676$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Teachers had a higher perception of career ladders than administrators.

Research Question 6: Is there a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems component of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_6: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers' perceptions of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems component.

Questions 28 through 33 on the questionnaire were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The mean for perceptions of educator evaluation for administrators was 1.99 and a standard deviation of .46, and a mean of 2.61 and a standard deviation of .72 for teachers. As reported in table 12, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(179) = 4.069$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Teachers had a higher perception of educator evaluation than administrators.

Utilizing the Mississippi Department of Education Public Reports Assessment School Data for years 2007 through 2013, the resulting quantitative data were used to answer research questions and hypotheses seven and eight:

7. Is there a significant difference between the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools before and after the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant?

   H_7: There is no significant difference between percentage of proficient students and the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant.

8. Is there a significant difference in the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF Schools and comparable non-TIF Mississippi schools?

   H_8: There is no statistically significant difference between percent of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools and comparable non-TIF Mississippi schools.

Table 13

TIF School Percent of Proficient and Advanced Students

School Year	Mean	Std. Deviation
Before TIF Grant Implementation		
2007-08	41.86	6.19
2008-09	43.41	2.97
2009-10	46.34	4.41
TIF Grant Implementation		
2010-11	46.48	6.38
2011-12	50.14	4.89
2012-13	52.89	6.88

Repeated measures ANOVA was used to compare school achievement for the TIF Schools before and during grant period. Table 13 reports the mean and standard deviation of the percent of students who scored proficient and advanced at TIF schools on the MCT2 (English/Language Arts, Math, Science) for the years since grant implementation and years just before grant implementation. The means before the grant was implemented range from 41.86 to 46.34 with standard deviations ranging from 2.97

to 6.19. The means after the grant has been implemented range from 46.48 to 52.89 with standard deviations ranging from 4.89 to 6.88.

Hypothesis Results

Research Question 7: Is there a significant difference between the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools before and after the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant?

H_7: There is no significant difference between percentage of proficient students and the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant.

To evaluate research question 7, a repeated measures ANOVA was used to analyze whether the independent variables: time, treatment, and treatment by time interaction made a difference in the dependent variable: percent of students who scored a minimum of proficient on the MCT2. The F-test revealed that there is a significant difference in treatment with $F(1,8) = 12.859$, $p = .007$. The percent of students who scored a minimum of proficient on the MCT2 is higher than before the TIF grant was implemented. The test also revealed that there is a significant difference in time with $F(2,7) = 12.811$, $p = .005$. The percent of students who scored a minimum of proficient on the MCT2 increased each year. The test revealed that there is no significant difference in the time by treatment interaction with $F(2,7) = .325$, $p = .733$.

For research question eight, repeated measures ANOVA was used to compare each TIF school's minimum percent of MCT2 proficiency scores with a selected, similar public school for school years 2011-12 and 2012-13. The selection of each school was made by using the MDE Reporting System which listed school information, such as

ethnic make-up, enrollment, grade levels, size of district, size of town/city, etc. All of these factors were used to determine a best-fit for comparison with a TIF school.

Table 14

Percent of Students Scoring Proficient and Advanced on MCT2

Schools	Mean	Std. Deviation
TIF Schools 2011-12	50.87	5.15
TIF Schools 2012-13	53.87	7.18
Comparison Schools 2011-12	52.67	9.23
Comparison Schools 2012-13	56.20	12.55

Table 14 reports the descriptive statistics for the comparison of scores for both TIF schools and comparison schools. For TIF schools, the mean for the 2011-12 school year was 50.87 with 5.12 standard deviations. For the 2012-13 school year, the mean was 53.87 with 7.18 standard deviations. For the comparison schools, the mean for the 2011-12 school year was 52.67 with 9.23 standard deviations. For the 2012-13 school year, the mean was 56.20 with 12.55 standard deviations.

An ANOVA was used to analyze whether the independent variables: time, group, and time by treatment made a difference in the dependent variable: percent of students who scored a minimum of proficient on the MCT2. The F-test indicated there is significant difference in time with $F(1,9) = 9.926$, $p = .012$. Both TIF schools and comparison schools increased each year. The test also revealed there is no statistically significant difference by treatment group with $F(1,9) = 1.019$, $p = .339$. Both groups'

scores increased over time. The test revealed there is no significant difference by group by time interaction with F (1,9) = .101, p = .758. Both groups increased equally over time.

Summary

This study investigated the difference between teacher and administrator perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant and whether or not the grant made a difference in the percentage of students who scored proficient and advanced on the MCT2. The study included 181 educators who were all certified staff at the 10 TIF schools throughout the state of Mississippi. Data were gathered and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis of this quantitative study. Independent sample tests, descriptive statistics, and ANOVA were all used to identify the statistically significant relationships among the variables. Frequency data revealed that the greatest majority of the educators had 11-20 years of experience. The study also revealed a statistically significant difference in administrator and teacher perceptions of MS TIF grant and several of its components. Teacher perceptions were higher than that of administrators. The study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the percent of students who scored proficient and advanced on the MCT2 before and after the implementation of the TIF grant in MS TIF schools. More students scored proficient and advanced after implementation of the grant. The study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the percent of students who scored proficient and advanced on the MCT2 in TIF schools when compared to similar, non-TIF Mississippi schools.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study, and the findings from this research study as identified in Chapter IV. This chapter begins with a summary of the research study, followed by the conclusion and discussion. Limitations from the study, recommendations for implementation, and recommendations for further research are also presented.

The Mississippi Department of Education received funds from the U. S. Department of Education to pilot a performance-based compensation system with purpose of increasing student achievement in school districts that had a history of being underperforming when compared to other districts. Ten schools in seven districts agreed to participate in the Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. This five-year grant combined performance-based compensation with other components, including professional development, career ladders, educator evaluation, and professional learning communities to improve teacher effectiveness and raise student achievement scores. This study sought to determine differences in teacher and administrator perceptions of the MS TIF grant and its components by using independent sample tests. The study also determined if there a significant difference in student achievement by evaluating the percent of students who scored proficient and advanced in TIF schools before implementation and after implementation of the grant by using ANOVA.

Summary of Procedures

The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board granted permission to conduct a questionnaire within all 10 Mississippi TIF schools

(Appendix F). Certified educators in the TIF schools were invited to participate and given the option to complete the questionnaire on paper or electronically. All 181 participants completed the questionnaire electronically via Qualtrics. Questionnaires, along with confidentiality statement and instructions, were emailed to all certified personnel in TIF schools at the end of May, 2014. The online questionnaire remained open for three weeks for educators to complete. After the three-week period, the online questionnaire was closed and responses were analyzed using SPSS reports of descriptive statistics, independent sample tests, and ANOVA.

Major Findings

Research Question One asked if there was a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant. The independent samples *t*-test used indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in teacher and administrator perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant. The teachers' perception of the TIF grant was higher than the perceptions of the administrators.

Research Question Two asked if there was a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the performance-based compensation component of the grant. The independent samples *t*-test used indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in teacher and administrator perceptions of the performance-based compensation component.

Research Question Three asked if there was a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the professional development component. The independent samples *t*-test used indicated that there was a statistical difference in teacher and administrator perceptions of the professional development component. The teachers'

perception of professional development was higher than the perceptions of the administrators.

Research Question Four asked if there was a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the professional learning communities component. The independent samples *t*-test used indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in teacher and administrator perceptions of the professional learning communities component. The teachers' perception of professional learning communities was higher than the perceptions of the administrators.

Research Question Five asked if there was a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the career ladders component. The independent samples *t*-test used indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in teacher and administrator perceptions of the career ladders component. The teachers' perception of career ladders was higher than the perceptions of the administrators.

Research Question Six asked if there was a difference in teachers and administrators' perceptions of the teacher and principal evaluation systems component. The independent samples test used indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in teacher and administrator perceptions of the teacher and principal evaluation systems component. The teachers' perception of teacher and principal evaluation systems was higher than the perceptions of the administrators.

Research Question Seven asked if there was the difference between the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools before and after the implementation of the Mississippi TIF grant. The ANOVA test used indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the percentage of students who scored

proficient in the TIF schools before and after the implementation of the grant. The percentage was higher during years of grant implementation than years before implementation.

Research Question Eight asked if there was a difference between the percentage of proficient students in Mississippi TIF grant schools and comparable non-TIF Mississippi schools. The ANOVA test used indicated that there was no statistical difference in the percentage of students who scored proficient in the TIF schools than the students who scored proficient in the non-TIF comparable schools. Both TIF schools and non-TIF schools increased over time.

Conclusion

The overall findings of this study support current research noted in the review of literature. Additional compensation alone will not cause an increase in student achievement; it must be combined with other components such as a rigorous educator evaluation system and targeted, effective professional development (Sawchuck, 2010a). However, educator perceptions of the components of the Mississippi TIF grant indicate that performance-based compensation was an important factor of the grant. This component was the only one in which administrators and teachers' perceptions were not significantly statistically different. This indicates pay is important to both teachers and administrators, since two of the highest mean scores were found in questions related to this component and perceptions were the same. This supports the theory that traditional pay scale of salary schedules may no longer be the best way to compensate teachers, and other factors should be considered (Hess, 2010). The perceptions further indicate that although performance-based compensation is important to educators, compensation and

career ladders were perceived as the least effective components in improving teacher practice and student achievement. According to Sawchuck (2010c), this suggests that educators perceive that they are already implementing best practices in instruction, but would like better compensation for their efforts. The low perception of compensation supports the research of those who agree that a performance-based compensation system would not work in education, simply because teachers are not holding back their best work waiting on an incentive to do more; they are already doing more (Sawchuck, 2010c).

The data indicate that teachers have higher perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant than administrators. Of the six components evaluated, administrators reported a negative perception of all but one component, performance-based compensation. Professional learning communities, professional development, career ladders, the TIF grant overall, and educator evaluation all received a negative perception from administrators. Although teacher perceptions were higher than administrators, only one component, performance-based compensation, had a mean above 3.0 for teachers, which suggests they agreed that performance-based compensation was effective. The negative perceptions of the Mississippi TIF grant are consistent with the current research that educators are still somewhat apprehensive with a new system of pay when they are not familiar with the criteria required (Ramirez, 2010). Since perceptions indicated that MS TIF participants had little knowledge of the performance-based compensation system component, educators and lawmakers should involve educators on all components of the system in order to increase buy-in and gain a more favorable perception (Ritter & Jensen, 2010). Lawmakers must find ways to increase teacher pay, especially in Mississippi, so

that it is comparable to other states and the salaries of other professional careers. Educator perceptions on pay questions on the questionnaire indicate that educators do not want to wait until they have been in their careers for several years to be compensated well; they want the opportunity to earn well early in their careers like other professions (Johnson & Papay, 2010).

The achievement data of this study indicated that TIF schools had the statistically significant higher percentage of students who scored a minimum of proficient on MCT2 once the grant was implemented. This could also indicate that some of the components and procedures implemented by the grant assisted in this improvement. Although the TIF schools' proficiency percentages grew, the data indicates that the growth was not statistically significant when compared to a similar, non-TIF schools. Both TIF and non-TIF schools' proficiency percentages grew over time.

Limitations

Participants included only administrators and teachers from the ten schools and seven districts that participated in the Mississippi TIF grant. Furthermore, those who participated in the study were exclusively Mississippi educators and the findings may not be indicative of administrators and teachers' perceptions of key components of the TIF in other states. Additionally, perceptions of key components that may be implemented in other schools that are not a TIF school were not participants of this study. Also, additional comparable schools with similar characteristics as TIF schools were not selected for achievement comparisons. There was no question on the questionnaire that asked educators if they had received additional compensation to determine if this influenced perceptions of the grant.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, there are several recommendations to make to the Mississippi Department of Education, education policy makers, district leaders, legislators, and national education leaders. Since student achievement and educator pay is a constant topic in education, leaders should use the study to determine what factors are important in a model that involves performance-based compensation.

Based on the findings, the educators had low perceptions of the evaluation component. Research on teacher evaluation suggests that teacher evaluation systems should effectively tie in classroom observations and student growth measures to accurately assess a teacher (Marshall, 2012). Although the TIF grant provides student growth information and ties it to evaluation, the growth is received during the next school year, so it is not valid for the assessment of the current year's teacher practice. Educators should seek ways to tie in classroom observation and student growth data on high-stakes tests for the current year. Also, the evaluation system should offer feedback needed to assist teachers in improving their practice, thus improving student achievement.

Findings of the study indicate the Mississippi TIF grant educators had low perceptions of the professional development component. Although responses indicate that educators perceive professional development as the most effective component to improve student achievement and teacher quality, the quality and quantity did not meet the needs of the educators. Educational leaders should find a way to connect the teacher's evaluation on M-STAR with targeted professional development (Sawchuck, 2010a). The research suggests targeted, individualized professional development is more

meaningful and effective than whole-group, generic professional development (Dash et al., 2012). It must meet the needs of each individual teacher.

The career ladders component was not perceived as an effective component of the TIF grant. It was one of the components perceived as least effective. The grant created three additional positions (master teacher, mentor teacher, and professional development coordinator), but the results indicate the presence of these educators had no positive change in the school environment. Grant leaders should ensure that each person in the career ladder roles is well-qualified and trained to perform their duties to increase their individual and collective effectiveness in their respective schools. Administrators should also understand the roles of the career ladder professionals and be knowledgeable of ways to use their talents to mentor teachers and provide effective assistance.

The findings indicate the presence of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the TIF schools. However, educator responses indicate these are not utilized to their full potential to bring about a positive effect in the school environment. Many educators indicated they are not comfortable with discussing their educational practice with colleagues. This suggests that principals should train their staffs on how to conduct PLCs at their schools and foster an environment where educators are comfortable. The research suggests that this growing system of collaboration amongst educators has the potential to enhance the learning environment when educators have a common vision of sharing that focuses on the reflection of practice to meet the needs of students (Jones et al., 2013).

The TIF grant has been funded by the U. S. Department of Education (USDE) for additional years with new schools and districts that choose to participant. The USDE should consider creating a procedure for involving stakeholders more closely in the

process when determining how such factors as performance-based compensation, professional development, etc. will be implemented. This collective effort will increase buy-in from the participating educators. Furthermore, there should be more local and national conversations about performance-based compensation models to decrease the fear and apprehension of educators.

Educators should consider using some of the key components of the Mississippi TIF grant to assist schools in increasing the percent of proficient students. All of the components, performance-based compensation, professional development, career ladders, evaluation, and professional learning communities were considered as beneficial by some educators in the study. The educational leaders must go beyond surface implementation of the components, but ensure there is cohesiveness of the components to form a well-linked system that improves and compensates teachers and directly affects student achievement (Jerald, 2010). The schools should research best-practices for implementing each of them. Schools and states could use all of the research on TIF to improve their schools and districts by evaluating what worked and what did not (Hassel & Katzir, 2010).

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations were made as a result of this research:

1. This study should be conducted in another state that has received TIF funds to do a comparison across states. This would provide data on the effectiveness and perceptions from more than one group of educators.

2. A study that more closely researches the student achievement of TIF schools should be completed using the state accountability model. This could really help educators to determine if the grant had a direct effect on student achievement.
3. Using the results of this research study to make appropriate changes in implementation and program management of the Mississippi TIF, the state should consider reapplying or extending the TIF grant.
4. The state should use the Mississippi TIF schools as a pilot and implement many of the components in non-TIF schools since the components are all research-based practices.
5. Mississippi educators are amongst the lowest paid in the country. The state should use this research study to find ways to tie-in pay and student achievement to better compensate those educators who are effective. This would help to attract and retain good teachers, which is a problem in many Mississippi school districts.
6. The Mississippi TIF Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire should be administered to the Mississippi TIF educators again at the completion of the grant to determine a change in their perceptions over time.
7. A study should be done to focus on one of the components of the grant, such as educator evaluation, career ladders, performance-based compensation, professional development, or professional learning communities.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Mississippi TIF (Teacher Incentive Fund) Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire

Participant Background Information

1. Indicate your current level of experience as an educator.

_____ 0-3 _____ 4-10 _____11-20 _____ 21 or more

2. Please indicate your role for the 2013-14 school year.

__ Administrator (Principal, Assistant principal, Master teacher, Mentor teacher, PD coordinator)

__Teacher

3. Indicate your work assignment.

____Full-time at TIF School ____Part-time at TIF School

Performance-Based Compensation

4. The state's current pay structure (salary schedule based on years of experience and education level) is an adequate way to pay educators.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

5. Incentive pay encourages me to improve my practice as an educator.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

6. Merit pay will improve teacher practice if implemented properly.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

7. Knowing that I may get extra pay encourages me to work harder.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

8. I am knowledgeable of the performance-based incentive criteria of the TIF Grant.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

9. Every teacher in the state should be paid based on performance.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

Professional Development

10. The TIF Grant has provided effective professional development for my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

11. Since participation with the TIF Grant, the quality and quantity of professional development has increased at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

12. The professional development sessions were of high quality.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

13. The professional development offered at my school meets the professional needs of the faculty.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

14. The professional development offered at my school meets my professional needs as an educator.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

15. The professional development offered at my school causes me to develop as an educator.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

16. The use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) has increased collaboration among staff members at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

17. Working collaboratively with other educators is encouraged and supported at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

18. I am pleased with how PLCs work at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

19. PLCs have caused me to reflect upon my instructional practice.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

20. PLCs have caused me to change some aspect of my instructional practice.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

21. I am comfortable discussing components of my instruction with colleagues.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

Career Ladders

22. The TIF Grant has created career ladder positions at my school, such as Master teacher, Professional Development coordinator, and Mentor teacher.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

23. The addition of the career ladder individuals has had a positive affect on the educational environment at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

24. The mentor teacher is significant to enhancing the learning environment at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

25. The master teacher is significant to enhancing the learning environment at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

26. The PD Coordinator is significant to enhancing the learning environment at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

27. After the TIF Grant ends, the district should find funds to ensure that career ladder positions will continue at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

Educator Evaluation

28. The TIF Grant changed the way teachers and principals are evaluated at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

29. M-STAR is an effective instrument to accurately assess the performance of teachers.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

30. The implementation of M-STAR has positively impacted teacher practice at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

31. M-STAR caused me to make positive changes in my instruction.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

32. Since using M-STAR, I receive more feedback from administrators related to my practice.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

33. The VAL-ED principal survey provides an effective assessment of the principal(s) at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant Overall

34. By the end of the TIF Grant, I believe my school will see significant gains in student achievement.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

35. Since being involved in the TIF Grant, my opinion of merit pay is:

_____More favorable _____ Less favorable _____Unchanged

36. Overall, I am pleased with the implementation of the TIF Grant at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

37. The TIF Grant has positively affected student achievement at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

38. The TIF Grant has positively affected teacher practice at my school.

_____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree ____Strongly Disagree

39. Which component of the TIF Grant do you think is most effective at improving teacher performance and student achievement?

a. performance-based compensation b. evaluation of educators c. professional development d. professional learning communities e. career ladders

40. Which component of the TIF Grant do you think is least effective at improving teacher performance and student achievement?

a. performance-based compensation b. evaluation of educators c. professional development d. professional learning communities e. career ladders

APPENDIX B

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 14052001
PROJECT TITLE: Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Implementation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant in Mississippi Pilot Schools
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Albert Carter
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Education Leadership and School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 05/21/2014 to 05/20/2015

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT

Albert W. Carter
2019 Branch Creek Drive
Byram, MS 39272
Telephone (662) 820-5611

April 16, 2014

Superintendent
XXX School District
XXX, MS XXXXX

Dear Superintendent,

I am in the process of completing requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Educational Leadership at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. One of the requirements for this degree is that I conduct research and submit a dissertation. The title of my dissertation is Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Implementation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant in Mississippi Pilot Schools. The purpose of the study is to understand educator perceptions of the MS TIF Grant. The study will be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

To complete this task, I would like to survey several of your district's principals, assistant principals, teachers and other certified staff. With your permission, I will send the survey instrument via email. It will only take participants 10-15 minutes to complete. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous. Participants' names and the name of their school or district will not be reported. I am requesting your permission to include your school district in this process. With your consent, I will contact the principal and master teachers at the school(s) to provide specific instructions for emailing of the instrument.

I will need written permission from you on district letterhead. For your convenience, I have drafted a sample letter which you may edit. Once I receive your permission, I will contact the principal(s) to make arrangements to conduct the study. If you have questions concerning the research, please contact me. Before research is conducted, this project will be reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-6820.

Sincerely yours,

Albert W. Carter
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER

Mississippi TIF (Teacher Incentive Fund) Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire

Dear Participant:

I am Albert Carter, a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi majoring in Educational Administration and Supervision. The attached questionnaire is a part of my dissertation entitled "Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Implementation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant in Mississippi Pilot Schools".

I have obtained permission from your superintendent's office to invite you to participate in this research by completing the Mississippi TIF (Teacher Incentive Fund) Grant Educator Perceptions Questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain completely anonymous. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the MS TIF Grant.

Please take time to complete this questionnaire via the online link, which will take between 10-15 minutes. Once you have completed it, the researcher will automatically receive your responses via the site. If you have any questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, please contact me by phone at (662) 820-5611 or by email at carteralbert@yahoo.com.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-6820.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Albert Carter
Doctoral Candidate
University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
(School's Letterhead)

Upon approval of The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB), Albert Carter has my permission to survey teachers of the Jackson Public School District in order to collect data for his dissertation, Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Implementation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant in Mississippi Pilot Schools.

I understand that all participation is voluntary and that individual responses will be kept confidential. Further, any changes in the research protocol must be approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Superintendent of Education

APPENDIX F

TIF SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND COMPARISON SCHOOLS

TIF Comparison Schools

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Bruce Upper Elementary	Calhoun County	218				360
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	113	52		Female	170	47
Male	106	48		Male	190	53
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	71	33		Black	107	30
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	*	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	140	64		White	248	69
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*
TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Cook Elementary	Columbus School District	788				700
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	393	50		Female	308	44
Male	395	50		Male	392	56
Asian	7	*		Asian	11	*
Black	605	77		Black	562	80
Hispanic	32	*		Hispanic	30	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	140	18		White	87	12
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Franklin Academy	Columbus School District	427				376
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	193	45		Female	189	50
Male	234	55		Male	187	50
Asian	8	*		Asian	6	*
Black	378	89		Black	331	88
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	*	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	36	8		White	37	10
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Central Elementary	George County	508				527
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	238	47		Female	237	51
Male	270	53		Male	232	49
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	*	*		Black	*	*
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	17	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	492	*		White	438	93
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Oak Forest	Jackson Public School District	481				472
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	238	49		Female	189	45
Male	243	51		Male	230	55
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	462	*		Black	415	*
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	*	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	11	*		White	*	*
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Van Winkle Elementary	Jackson Public School District	418				428
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	214	51		Female	203	47
Male	204	49		Male	225	53
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	396	*		Black	425	*
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	*	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	8	*		White	*	*
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
North Jones Elementary	Jones County Schools District	869				1058
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	416	48		Female	518	49
Male	453	52		Male	540	51
Asian	14	*		Asian	*	*
Black	283	33		Black	182	17
Hispanic	111	13		Hispanic	150	14
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	442	51		White	704	67
Multi Racial	19	*		Multi Racial	16	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Magee Middle School	Simpson County School District	573				456
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	292	51		Female	205	44
Male	281	49		Male	257	56
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	295	51		Black	171	37
Hispanic	14	*		Hispanic	47	10
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	259	45		White	236	51
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Mendenhall Jr. High School	Simpson County School District	468				362
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	215	46		Female	186	51
Male	253	54		Male	176	49
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	249	53		Black	178	49
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	*	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	212	45		White	182	50
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

TIF School	District	Enrollment		Comparable School	District	Enrollment
Buckatunna Elementary	Wayne County School District	459				438
Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)		Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	220	48		Female	203	46
Male	239	52		Male	235	54
Asian	*	*		Asian	*	*
Black	268	58		Black	140	32
Hispanic	*	*		Hispanic	*	*
Native American	*	*		Native American	*	*
White	190	41		White	292	67
Multi Racial	*	*		Multi Racial	*	*

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